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HUGH MILLER

BY *L B L B L* W.

KEITH LEASK



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



# HUGH : MILLER

BY  
W : KEITH  
LEASK

FAMOUS  
SCOTS :  
SERIES



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## P R E F A C E

IN the absence of material dealing especially with his last years in Edinburgh a complete *Life* of Hugh Miller will probably never be attempted. I am informed by his daughter, Mrs. Miller Mackay, F.C. Manse, Lochinver, that the letters and materials sent out to Australia to form the basis of a projected biography by his son-in-law and daughter disappeared, and have never been recovered. The recent deaths of his son and of others who knew Hugh Miller in Cromarty and in Edinburgh still more preclude the appearance of a full and authentic presentation. To the scientist the works of Miller will ever form the best biography; to the general reader and to those who, from various causes, regard biography as made for man and not man for biography some such sketch as the following may, it is believed, not be unacceptable.

To treat Hugh Miller apart from his surroundings of Church and State would be as impossible, as it would be unjust. Accordingly the presentation

deliberately adopted has been from his own standpoint—the unhesitating and undeviating traditions of Scotland.

Geology has moved since his day. In the last chapter I have accordingly followed largely in the steps of Agassiz in the selection of material for a succinct account of Miller's main scientific and theological standpoints or contributions. My best thanks are due to Principal Donaldson of the University of St. Andrews for looking over the proof-sheets; to Sir Archibald Geikie, Director-General of the Geological Survey, London, for his admirable reminiscence of his early friend contained in the last pages of this work; and to my friend J. D. Symon, M.A., for the bibliography of Miller in the closing appendix.

W. K. L.

ABERDEEN, *April* 1896.

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
EARLY DAYS—IN CROMARTY . . . . .	9

## CHAPTER II

IN EDINBURGH—THE CROMARTY BANK . . . . .	37
--	----

## CHAPTER III

THE SCOTTISH CHURCH, 1560-1843—‘THE WITNESS’ . . . . .	68
--	----

## CHAPTER IV

IN EDINBURGH—LAST YEARS . . . . .	96
-----------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER V

IN SCIENCE . . . . .	119
----------------------	-----

APPENDIX : BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	154
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# HUGH MILLER

## CHAPTER I

'A wet sheet and a flowing sea,  
A wind that follows fast.'

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM

### EARLY DAYS—IN CROMARTY

THE little town of Cromarty lies perched on the southern shore of the entrance to the Firth of that name, and derives its name from the Cromachty, the crook or winding of the magnificent stretch of water known to Buchanan and the ancient geographers as the *Portus Salutis*, 'in which the very greatest navies may rest secure from storms.' In the history of Scotland the place is scarcely mentioned; and, indeed, in literary matters is known only from its association with the names of Hugh Miller and the rare figure of Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty, who had followed Charles II. to the 'crowning mercy' of Worcester fight, to land at last in the Tower. But for the silence of history the imagination or the credulity of the knight has atoned, by the production of a chronicle which

rivals fairly the *Ecclesiastical History* of the old wandering Scottish scholar Dempster, who had in Italy patriotically found the Maccabees to be but an ancient Highland family. According to Urquhart, whose translation of Rabelais has survived his eccentric disquisitions in genealogy and history, Alypos, the forty-third lineal descendant of Japhet, was the first to discover Cromarty, and, when the Scythians under Ethus pitched on the moor bounding the parish on the north, they had been opposed by the grandson of Alcibiades; in proof of which Sir Thomas could triumphantly point to remaining signs of 'trenches and castrametation' with a confidence which would have won the heart of Jonathan Monkbarns in *The Antiquary*.

The population of the district is essentially a mixed one, and strongly retains the distinctive features of the Scandinavian and the Gael. From Shetland to the Ord of Caithness, the population of the coast is generally, if not wholly, of the former type. Beyond the Ord to the north of the Firth of Cromarty, we find a wedge of Celtic origin, while from the southern shore to the Bay of Munlochy the Scandinavian element again asserts itself. Thus, as Carlyle escaped being born an Englishman by but a few miles, the separation from the Celtic stratum was, in Miller's case, effected by the narrow single line of the one-mile ferry. In later years, at all events, he would refer with evident satisfaction to his Teutonic origin. There was, as we shall have

occasion to notice, a certain Celtic lobe of imagination on the mother's side, but in his mental and political character the great leading features of the other race were undoubtedly predominant.

Whence Buchanan drew the possibilities of great fleets in the Firth of Cromarty is unknown unless he had in his memory some of the vessels of the old mariners, such as Sir Andrew Wood and the bold Bartons, or even the 'verrie monstrous schippe the Great Michael' that 'cumbered all Scotland to get her to sea.' Certain it is that for many a day its position had marked out the town as the natural centre of a coasting trade, though shortly after the Union the commerce of the place which had been considerable had declined. The real commencement of the prosperity of the place was due to the energy of a native, William Forsyth, whose life Miller has sketched in a little memoir originally drawn up for the family, and subsequently republished in his *Tales and Sketches* under the title of 'A Scottish Merchant of the Eighteenth century.' Forsyth had been appointed by the British Linen Company, established about 1746 in Edinburgh to promote the linen trade, its agent in the North throughout the whole district extending from Beauly to the Pentland Firth. The flax which was brought in vessels from Holland was prepared for use in Cromarty, and distributed by boats along the coast to Wick and Thurso. In the early days of the trade the distaff and the spindle were in general use; but Forsyth's efforts were successful in

the introduction of the spinning-wheel, though the older means of production lasted far into this century in the west of Ross and in the Hebrides. The coasting schooners of the agent were the means of introducing into the town teas and wines, cloth, glass, Flemish tiles, Swedish iron, and Norwegian tar and spars. The rents of the landed proprietors were still largely paid in kind, or in the feudal labour by which the Baron of Bradwardine managed to eke out a rather scanty rent roll. In this way the *mains* or the demesnes of the laird were tilled and worked, and the Martinmas corn rents were stocked in a barn or 'girnall,' like that of the Antiquary's famous John of legend, often to cause a surplus to hang on the hands of the proprietor, until the idea was fortunately devised of exporting it to England or to Flanders for conversion into malt.

Ship-carpentry or boat-building upon a humble scale had been long established, and the coasting trade lay between the North, Leith, Newcastle, and London. The Scottish sailors then on the eastern coast enjoyed a strong reputation for piety, such as, we fear, their descendants have not maintained. John Gibb of Borrowstouness, the antiquary may remember as the founder of the now forgotten sect of Gibbites or 'sweet singers,' who denounced all tolls and statutory impositions, abolished the use of tobacco and all excisable articles, and finally made a pilgrimage to the Pentland Hills to see the smoke and the desolation of Edinburgh as foretold by their founder. The wardrobes

and scrutoires of the local cabinet-maker, Donald Sandison, enjoyed a reputation through the North, and were, far into this century, found in the houses of Ross, together with the old eight-day clocks made in Kilwinning. But the great founder of its modern prosperity was George Ross, the son of a small proprietor in Easter Ross, who, after amassing a fortune as an army-agent as the friend of Lord Mansfield and the Duke of Grafton, had in 1772 purchased the estate of Cromarty. When he started his improvements in his native district, there was not a wheeled-cart in all the parish, and the knowledge of agriculture was rude. Green cropping and the rotation of crops were unknown, and in autumn the long irregular patches of arable land were intersected by stretches of moorland that wound deviously into the land, like the reaches of the Cromarty and the Beaully Firths. Though long opposed by tenacious local prejudices, he at length triumphed over the backward habits of the people, who yoked their oxen and their horses by the tail, and who justified their action by an appeal to the argument from design, and by a query as to what other end in creation such tails had been provided? Ross also established in the town a manufactory for hempen cloth, and erected what at the time was the largest ale-brewery in the North. A harbour was built at his own expense, and a pork trade of a thriving nature set on foot, wheat reared, the rotation of crops introduced, a nail and spade manufactory set up, and lace manufactures brought

from England. Such, then, was the condition of Cromarty at the beginning of the present century.

Far different was that of the surrounding Highlands. Protestantism had been at an early period introduced into Ross and Sutherland by its Earls and by Lord Reay. The Earl of Sutherland had been the first to subscribe the National Covenant in Greyfriars; and, after the suppression of the first Jacobite rising, Sir Robert Munro of Fowlis, as commissioner of the confiscated estates, had set himself to the creation of parishes and presbyteries in remote districts, where the Church of Scotland before had been unknown. In the better class of houses the old Highland fireplace, like a millstone, still occupied its place in the centre, with no corresponding aperture in the roof for the smoke. In the Western districts the greatest distress prevailed, for the country was at the parting of the ways in a time of transition. About the beginning of the present century the results of the French Revolution began to make themselves felt. Through the long war the price of provisions rose to famine price, and the impecunious Highland laird, like his more degenerate successor that batters on the sporting proclivities of the Cockney or American millionaire, set himself to the problem of increasing his rent-roll, and the system of evictions and sheep-farming on a large scale commenced. The Sutherland clearances forced the ejected Highlanders to Canada and the United States, while the poorer classes drifted down from the interior to the already overpopu-

lated shore-line, where they eked out, as crofters or as fishermen, a precarious existence without capital or the acquired experience of either occupation, and laid the seeds of the future crofter question. The manufacture of kelp, which for a time rendered profitable to many a Highland proprietor his barren acres on a rocky shore, was not destined to long survive the introduction of the principles of Free Trade. The potato blight succeeded finally in reducing the once fairly prosperous native of the interior to chronic poverty and distress.

On the West Coast, the heavy rainfall is unfavourable to agriculture on any extended scale. From Assynt to Mull the average rain-gauge is thirty-five inches, and the cottars of Ross were threatened with the fate of the Irish in Connemara, through periodic failures in the herring fishery and liabilities for their scanty holdings to their landlords. Miller found the men of Gairloch, in 1823, where the public road was a good day's journey from the place, still turning up or scratching the soil with the old Highland *cass-chron*, and the women carrying the manure on their backs to the fields in spring, while all the time they kept twirling the distaff—old and faded before their time, like the women in some of the poorer cantons the traveller meets with in Switzerland. Their constant employment was the making of yarn; and, as we have seen, the spinning-wheel was for long as rare as the possession of a plough or horse. The boats built for the fishing were still caulked with

moss dipped in tar and laid along the seams, the ropes being made of filaments of moss-fir stripped with the knife, while the sails were composed of a woollen stuff whose hard thread had been spun on the distaff, for hemp and flax were practically unknown. Such, in 1263, had at Largs been the equipment of the galleys of Haco,

‘ When Norse and Danish galleys plied  
Their oars within the Firth of Clyde,  
And floated Haco’s banner trim  
Above Norweyan warriors grim.’

*Marmion*, iii. xx.

Such, too, had been the traditional custom for centuries after of the boatbuilders in the Western Highlands.

In Cromarty, then, on the 10th of October 1802, Hugh Miller was born—in a long, low-built six-roomed house of his great-grandfather, one of the last of the old buccaneers of the Spanish Main, who had thriftily invested his pieces of eight in house-property in his native place. His mother was the great-granddaughter of Donald Roy of Nigg, of whom, as a kind of Northern Peden or Cargill, traditions long lingered. In his early days, Donald had been a great club and football player in the Sunday games that had been fostered in the semi-Celtic parish by King James’s *Book of Sports*, and which, it may be remembered, had been popular in the days of Dugald Buchanan of Rannoch at a time when the observance of the seventh day and of the King’s writ never ran beyond the Pass of Killiecrankie. At the Revolution, however, Donald had become the sub-

ject of religious convictions ; and when, on the death of Balfour of Nigg in 1756, an unpopular presentee, Mr. Patrick Grant, was forced upon the parish, resistance was offered. Four years before this, Gillespie of Carnock had been deposed on the motion of John Home, author of *Douglas*, seconded by Robertson of Gladsmuir, the subsequent historian of *Charles V.*, for his refusal to participate in the settlement of Richardson to Inverkeithing ; and when some of the presbytery, in fear of similar proceedings, had met for the induction, they found an empty church and an old man protesting that 'if they settled a man to the walls of that kirk, the blood of the parish of Nigg would be required at their hands.' For long the entire parish clung to the Church of Scotland, but never could they be induced to enter the building again, and so they perforce allied themselves to the Burgher Secession. Thus early was the non-intrusion principle made familiar to Miller, and thus early were made manifest the miserable effects of the high-handed policy which, begun in the long reign of Robertson, was destined a century later to have such disastrous results.

In early youth his father had sailed in an East India-man, and during the intervals of his Indian and Chinese voyages had learned to write and add to his nautical knowledge stores of general reading and information not then common among sailors. Storing up, instead of drinking, his grog-money, he drove a small trade with the natives of these countries in little articles

that had excited their curiosity, and for which, hints his distinguished son, the Custom-house dues were never very punctually or rigorously paid. Pressed, however, by a man-of-war that had borne down upon the Indiaman when in a state of mutiny, after a brief experience of the stern discipline of the navy not yet tempered by the measures of reform introduced after the mutiny of the *Nore*, he returned when not much turned thirty to Cromarty, where his savings enabled him to buy a coasting sloop and set up house. For this the site was purchased at £400, a very considerable sum in those days, and thus his son could, even in the high franchise qualifications after the Reform Bill, exercise the right of voting for the Whig party. The kelp trade, of which we have spoken, among other things engaged the efforts of his father, who had been appointed agent in the North and Hebrides for the Leith Glass-works. Driven by a storm round Cape Wrath and through the Pentland Firth, the vessel, after striving to reach the sheltered roadstead of the Moray Firth, was forced to put in at Peterhead. On the 9th of November 1807 he set sail, but foundered with all hands, by the starting, as was believed, of a plank. During more than one hundred years the sea had been the graveyard of the family : Miller's father, grandfather, and two grand-uncles had been all drowned at sea.

At the time of his father's death the son had just by one month completed his fifth year. At that time

happened the circumstance which he himself relates, and which we mention here in this place both for the interest attaching to it in the history of his own mental development, and for various subtle psychological reasons to which we shall advert later, and which cannot fail to be observed by the careful student of his works. The last letter to his wife had been written by his father from Peterhead, and on its receipt, 'the house-door, which had been left unfastened, fell open, and I was despatched from her side to shut it. I saw at the open door, within less than a yard of my breast, as plainly as ever I saw anything, a dissevered hand and arm stretched towards me. Hand and arm were apparently those of a female: they bore a livid and sodden appearance; and, directly fronting me, where the body ought to have been, there was only blank transparent space, through which I could see the dim forms of the objects beyond. I commemorate the story as it lies fixed in my memory, without attempting to explain it.' In after years he would say of such mental or visual hallucinations that they were such as 'would render me a firm believer in apparitions, could I not account for them in this way, as the creatures of an imagination which had attained an unusual and even morbid strength at a time when the other mental faculties were scarcely at all unfolded.' In this connection the similar case of Chatterton need only be alluded to, but the question will be treated again in describing his later years.

Like Burns, Carlyle, and Scott, Miller seems to have borne the powerful impress, mentally and physically, of his father. Yet, like the mothers of the first two, Mrs. Miller bequeathed to her son his store of legend and story and the imagination that was thus so early awakened. The new house which his father had built remained for some little time after his death untenanted; and, as the insurance of the sloop was deferred or disputed by an insolvent broker, his mother had recourse to her needle as the means by which she could best support her family. Three children had been born, and her brothers came to her assistance and lightened her task by taking her second daughter, a child of three, to live with them. Both of the girls died of a fever within a few days of each other, the one in her twelfth, and the other in her tenth year.

Of these two uncles, the James and Sandy of his *Schools and Schoolmasters*, Miller has spoken with deserved affection and loyalty. To them he confesses he owed more real education than ever he acquired from all other sources; and, belonging as they do to the class of humble and worthy men that seems pre-eminently the boast and pride of Scottish life, they will merit a detailed account. Of this type some little knowledge had been made known by Lord Jeffrey in his review of Cromek's *Reliques*, where such men as the father of Burns and those of his immediate circle were first introduced to their proper place as those 'from whom old Scotia's grandeur springs.' In his

own *Reminiscences*, Carlyle has added to our acquaintance with these men through his sketch of his own father and others, who are, says Professor Blackie, the natural outcome of the republican form of our Scottish Church government, and of the national system of education so early developed by Knox and the first Reformers.

The elder of the two brothers, James, was a harness-maker in steady employment in the surrounding agricultural district, so that from six in the morning till ten at night his time would be fully occupied, thus leaving him but scanty leisure. But, in the long evenings, he would fix his bench by the hearth, and listen while his nephew or his own younger brother or some neighbour would read. In the summer, he would occupy his spare hours upon his journeys to and from his rural rounds of labour in visiting every scene of legend and story far and near, and so keen were his powers of perception and ready expression in matters of a historical and antiquarian nature, that his nephew regrets he had not become a writer of books. Some part of this information, however, he has attempted to preserve in his *Scenes and Legends*.

To the younger brother, Alexander, he seems to have been even more indebted. If to the one he owed his gift of ready and natural expression, it was to the other that he was indebted for his powers of observation. Originally educated as a cart-wright, he had served for seven years in the navy, sailing with Nelson, witnessing

the mutiny at the Nore, the battle of Camperdown under Duncan, and sharing the Egyptian campaign of Abercromby. Even on his discharge, he was still ready in 1803 to shoulder a musket as a volunteer, when Napoleon at Boulogne 'armed in our island every freeman.' The scientific interest, too, of the man may be judged from the fact that in the Egyptian expedition, during the landing, he managed to transfer a murex to his pocket from the beach, and the first ammonite which formed the nucleus of his nephew's geological collection was also brought home from an English Liassic deposit. Facts like these and the presence of such men should go far to dispel much of the cheap sentiment introduced into the current of Scottish life by writers such as Smiles and others, who profess to be ever finding some 'peasant' or 'uneducated genius' in the subjects of their all too unctuous biographies. Such a class has really no existence in Scotland, and between such men as Miller, Burns, or even the unfortunate and sorely buffeted Bethunes, there is a great gulf fixed when they are sought to be brought into relation with men like John Clare and Robert Bloomfield. All the Scotchmen, born in however originally humble circumstances, had the advantage of education at the parish school; and, slight though in some cases the result may have been, it yet for ever removes the possibility of illiteracy which the English reader at once conjures up at the sound of such surroundings. The more the critic

studies the facts of Burns' early years and education, and the really remarkable stock of information with which he was to rouse the honest wonder of Dugald Stewart—his mathematical attainments and his philosophical grasp, not to mention his possession of a very powerful English prose style that makes every line of his *Letters* really alive and matterful—the less we shall hear of peasant genius and untaught writers. We question if one half of the members of the Edinburgh bar, such as Lockhart has described them at the arrival of Burns in Edinburgh, had reached such an amount of general and poetical literature as that easily held in command by the poet. We have heard an old school-fellow of Edward Irving and Carlyle at the burgh school of Annan remark on the misconception of Froude as to the true social rank of their respective parents. Horace and Burns seem, as Theodore Martin has shown, not unlike in the matter of their fathers, and the possession of such sets their children far out of that circle of contracted social and moral surroundings in which the biographers of the Smiles class have too long set them.

The knowledge of his letters Miller seems, like the elder Weller, to have acquired from a study of the local signboards, and in his sixth year he was sent to a dame's school, where he spelt his way through the old curriculum of a child's education in Scotland—the Shorter Catechism, the Proverbs, and the New Testament. He managed to discover for himself the story

of Joseph; and even in the old six-volume edition of Lintot the genius of Homer was early made manifest. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, evidently in some such form as Macaulay has described, made for the cottage, followed; and, in course of time, the collection of books which his father had left was eagerly devoured. Among them were *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*—both never so familiar in Scotland to boys as they are in England—Cook's *Voyages*, John Howie of Lochgoin's *Worthies*, the *Voyages* of Anson, Drake, Raleigh, Dampier, and Byron, 'my grand-dad's narrative' of the poet. It was not till his tenth year that he became, as he says, 'thoroughly a Scot,' and this was effected by a perusal of Blind Harry's *Wallace*, that 'Bible of the Scottish people,' as Lord Hailes has called it, following or anticipating the remark by Wolf as to the similar position of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* among the Greeks. No one now need be informed about the influence that quaint old work had produced in Burns, and through him on the subsequent re-awakening of the national spirit at the end of the eighteenth century. Barbour's *Bruce* has remained the possession of the scholar and the antiquary, while this work of the old minstrel, literally 'sung by himself for small earnings and good cheer, at festivals and other days of merriment,' as Bentley had said of his great predecessor, has had an abiding influence on literature, and on the national character. 'Up to Crummade (Cromarty) and through the Northland' had blind Harry, with a fine patriotism,

and, we fear, a total disregard for geography, made his hero effect a raid. When a man has got a view from Dan to Beersheba in which to smite the enemy hip and thigh, he need not be troubled with a few outlying counties.

The parish school of Cromarty which Miller attended numbered about a hundred and twenty boys and girls. The windows of the building fronted the opening of the Cromarty Firth, recalling at least by 'the mystery of the ships' the Portland of Longfellow's own early days. The tax of twenty peats to the school from the Highland boatmen paid for every boat in the trade recalls the salary of the public hangman of Inverness and Aberdeen, and the dues often formed the subject of debate between the boys and the irate Gaels, who did not fail to retort the taunt of the hangman's perquisite. The schoolmaster was a worthy that might have sat for the figure of Jonathan Tawse in Dr. Alexander's *Johnny Gibb*, and was, though a fair scholar, rather inefficient as a disciplinarian and teacher. Yet it was his boast—one now, alas, in these days sadly becoming obsolete—that he sent forward more lads to the bursary competition at the Northern university than any other teacher, and his 'heavy class' of a few boys in Latin was increased by his persuading the willing Uncle James to set Miller to the *Rudiments* in that time-honoured volume by Ruddiman, who had in his own days been a first bursar at Aberdeen. The teaching of Latin had been one of the props to educa-

tion introduced by the Reformers, and so distinct had been the little note of pedantry, perhaps in this way fostered, that Smollett makes the barber in *Roderick Random* quote Horace in the original, and Foote in a farce has made a valet insist on its possession as a shibboleth of nationality. We need but mention the favourite quotations in the ancient tongue by the Baron of Bradwardine and Dugald Dalgetty as a reminiscence of his own old days 'at the Marischal College'; while Miller also could remember an old cabinet-maker who carried for the sake of the big print a Latin New Testament to church. But no more with him than with Darwin could the linguistic faculty be stimulated. The *Rudiments* he thought the dullest book he had ever seen, and though in after-life he regretted the lost opportunity that at five-and-twenty might have made him a scholar and thus have saved ten of the best working years of his life, it may be doubted if in his case the loss amounted to more than in the case of Macaulay, who affected to bewail his loss of mathematics. In their truest form, scholars, like naturalists, are born and not made, nor will any labour in the linguistic field yield much to the scientist. The poet Gray wisely lamented the loss of time in his own case through forced labour at mathematics, a remark not even yet fully appreciated in Scotland, where the system of general excellence—that system under which Johnson so happily remarked that, while each man got a bite, no one got a bellyful—has too long stunted the

learning of the country and proved the bane alike of her schools and universities. 'As for Latin, I abominate it,' we find him writing from Cromarty in December 1838, in a letter now before us, 'and ever did since I burnt my *Rudiments*.'

More congenial amusement he found in the exercise of his story-telling faculty. When the master's back was turned, the *Sennachie*, as the master called him, would gather round him the other boys and narrate to them the adventures of his uncle, the story of Gulliver, and the shipwreck of Robinson Crusoe, or even the mysteries of Mrs. Radcliffe. When the sixty volumes of his father and the hundred and sixty of his uncles had been consumed, he fell in with a collection of essayists from Addison to Henry Mackenzie, the influence of which, along with Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, remained to the last as a powerful impress upon his prose style. But he was rapidly finding his national and true school. The Hill of Cromarty, part of De Beaumont's Ben-Nevis system, and the rich Liassic deposit of Eathie, were his favourite haunts, and his uncle Alexander, after his own work was done, would spend with him many an hour in the ebb tide. To the training thus acquired from this untaught naturalist he owed much of his own close powers of observation, which led, however, well-nigh to a fatal termination through an adventurous visit to the Doo-cot caves, from which he was rescued late at night during a high tide. This formed the subject of his first copy of

juvenile verse, which was recited 'with vast applause' by the handsomest girl at the Cromarty boarding establishment kept by Miss Elizabeth Bond. In her own early days she had known the father and mother of Scott; and, when in 1814 she had published her *Letters of a Village Governess*, she had dedicated them to the great novelist, who later on in the midst of his own troubles, living in lodgings away from Abbotsford, could yet remember to send her ten pounds 'to scare the wolf from the door,' as he cheerily remarked, when she had found the truth of her own saying that it was hard for a single woman to get through the world 'without a head'—unmarried.

His reading at this time received a curious extension through there falling into his hands a copy of *Military Medley* belonging to a retired officer, and on the shore he would carry out plans of fortification as therein set forth by the great French engineer Vauban. With sand for towers, and variegated shells and limpets for soldiers, he worked his way through the evolutions of troops, and no reader of Scott will fail to remember the similar action by Sir Walter which, in the introduction to the third canto of *Marmion*, he describes as taking place at Sandy Knowe, in the air of the Cheviots, near the old tower of Smailholme that 'charmed his fancy's waking hour':—

'Again I fought each combat o'er,  
Pebbles and shells in order laid  
The mimic ranks of war displayed.'

Nor will he fail to note the exact and characteristic point of difference in the two children, and how in each the child was father of the man. So early in both was the natural instinct of the future historian and the geologist awakened.

At a later period he seems rather to have become an unruly lad, and to have proved too much for his relations to manage. He was in the stage when such boys run away to sea or enlist, and his father's own calling might, from its well-nigh hereditary nature, have been thought to be the one most likely to be adopted. He enjoyed a somewhat dangerous reputation through carrying a knife and stabbing a companion in the thigh, but these escapades may in later years have been unconsciously heightened by remorse for wasted opportunities, and which in his case we have seen to amount to little or nothing. But the circle of his own companions was changing or breaking up, and it became necessary to decide on the future. His mother, after being a widow for well-nigh a dozen years, had married again, and he determined on being a mason, an occupation which he thought would, by his being employed in labour at intermittent seasons, afford him plenty leisure. Against this resolution both his uncles stoutly protested, and were prepared to assist him to the Northern university. 'I had no wish,' he says, 'and no peculiar fitness to be either lawyer or doctor; and as for the Church, that was too serious a direction to look in for one's bread, unless one could necessarily regard

one's-self as called to the Church's proper work, and I could not.' His uncles agreed to this view of the case; and so, reluctantly, the proposed course was abandoned. 'Better be anything,' they said, 'than an *uncalled* minister.' His was not the feeble sense of fitness possessed in such a high degree by the presentees to Auchterarder and Marnoch. As a member of the Moray nation he would naturally have proceeded to King's College in Aberdeen, then at the very lowest ebb of its existence as regards the abilities, or the want of them, of the wondrous corps of professors who filled its chairs. Carlyle in his *Sartor* has drawn certainly no flattering picture of the Edinburgh of his days, and his friend Professor Masson in the early volumes of *Macmillan's Magazine* has put before us the no less wonderful spectacle of the Marischal College of his own student life; nor would the state of King's College about 1820 yield much material for respect. The professoriate was grossly ignorant and conceited, and nepotism was rampant. As a child, we can recall the last expiring flicker of the race, and when we add that one aspiring graduate had published a pamphlet to refute Newton, and that the theology was of the wintriest type of even Aberdonian moderatism, couched in the most remote imitation of the rhetorical flights in *The Man of Feeling*, we have said enough to show that Miller certainly lost nothing by non-attendance at the classes in Aberdeen.

But it was not without reluctance that his resolve to

become a mason was allowed by his uncles. However, at last, there being another uncle on the mother's side who was a mason contracting for small jobs, and who employed an apprentice or two, he was bound apprentice for three years, from February 1820 to November 1822 and entered on the trade of mason and quarryman, for in the North the combination was constant. Long after, in the *Old Red Sandstone* he has described his first day's experience in the sandstone quarry, when, in that early spring morning and with a heavy heart, he set out to experience his first battle in the stern school of the world :

‘I was but a slim, loose-jointed boy at the time, fond of the pretty intangibilities of romance, and of dreaming when broad awake ; and, woful change ! I was now going to work at what Burns has instanced in his *Twa Dogs* as one of the most disagreeable of all employments. Bating the passing uneasiness occasioned by a few gloomy anticipations, the portion of my life which had already gone by had been happy beyond the common lot. I had been a wanderer among rocks and woods—a reader of curious books when I could get them—a gleaner of old traditional stories ; and now I was going to exchange all my day-dreams and all my amusements for the kind of life in which men toil every day that they may be enabled to eat, and eat every day that they may be enabled to toil. The quarry in which I wrought lay on the southern shore of a noble inland bay, or firth rather (the Bay of Cromarty), with a little clear stream on the one side and a thick fir wood on the other. It had been opened in the Old Red Sandstone of the dis

trict, and was overtopped by a huge bank of diluvial clay, and which rose over it in some places to the height of nearly thirty feet.'

He was to experience constant fits of depression and exhaustion, which caused sleep-walking; and though this after a time passed away, it was yet in later years to recur with fatal effects. In his master he was fortunate. He was one who would fully have come up to Carlyle's standard of his own father, 'making a conscience of every stone he laid.' Unconsciously, also, the apprentice was laying the foundations of the educated sense of sight so essential to the mason, and which was to stand him in excellent service in later years of geological ramblings. But the life was a hard one, from the surroundings in which the trade of a north-country mason had to be carried on. Living in a small village, where the lack of steady employment was naturally often felt, he had to eke out a living by odd jobs in the country, building farm-steadings or outhouses, with but scanty shelter and in surroundings too often unfavourable to comfort or morality. His experience of the bothy-system thus acquired by personal hardship he was in later years to turn to account in his leaders in *The Witness*—'I have lived,' he says, 'in hovels that were invariably flooded in wet weather by the over-flowings of neighbouring swamps, and through whose roofs I could tell the hour at night, by marking from my bed the stars that were passing over the openings along the ridge.' He was now to feel the truth of his uncles' warnings in dis-

suading him from the occupation. They had pointed to a hovel on a laird's property, who had left it standing that at some future date it might be turned to profit when he should have a drove of swine, or when a 'squad' of masons would pass that way. The life which had been introduced by the large farm system had been criticised already by Burns, who in the jottings of his *Highland Tour* had been struck by the superior intelligence of the Ayrshire cottar to the stolid boorishness of the agricultural labourer in the districts of the Lothians and the Merse. Recent legislation has largely mitigated the evils of the system which, even in a higher scale of comfort, has received a stern indictment in the eighth chapter of Dr. William Alexander's excellent work which we have before quoted, and to which, as the classic of the movement with which Miller's life is associated, we shall again refer. 'Better,' said Cobbett, who had studied it during a brief sojourn in the country, 'the fire-raising of Kent than the bothy system of Scotland.'

Even geological rambles and communings with the Muse afforded but scant alleviation of the hardships endured. During rainy weather the food would often be oatmeal eaten raw, at times with no salt save from a passing Highland smuggler, or consist of hastily prepared gruel or *brochan*. In time he learned to be a fair plain cook and baker, so as at least to satisfy the demands of the failing teeth of his old master. Accordingly, he was not sorry when the three years of his apprenticeship closed, and as a skilled labourer he

could retire about the Martinmas of 1822 to Cromarty, where his first piece of work was a cottage built with his own hands for his aunt.

In 1823 he was with a working party at Gairloch, and was there for the last time to experience the discomforts in the life of the working mason when employed by a niggard Highland laird. Forced from the barn in which they were at first domiciled into a cow-house to make room for the hay, they found themselves called upon to convert the materials of this hovel into the new building upon which they were engaged. This they effected by demolishing the entrance gradually, and hanging mats over it, leaving themselves ultimately to the cold October wind which not even Miller's experiences as a boy of the caves in the Sutors of Cromarty could render tolerable. But he had begun to see that the sphere of constant employment was narrow and narrowing in his native place, and, as the building mania in the South at the time seemed to afford a better opening for a steady workman, to Edinburgh accordingly he resolved to betake himself.

There was the additional reason in a desire to free the family from the burden of a house on the Coalhill of Leith, which had long before fallen to his father through the legacy of a relative, and which had threatened, through legal expenses, lack of tenants, and depreciated value, to become a serious legacy indeed. The parish church of North Leith had been

erected, and he had been rated as a heritor for a sum so considerable that the entire year's rental of the dilapidated tenement was swallowed up, together with most of his savings as a mason. He had come of age when in the miserable hovel at Gairloch we have described, and was now competent to deal with his luckless property. Setting sail in the Leith smack running between Cromarty and that port, he entered the Firth of Forth four days after losing sight of the Sutors. He saw with interest Dunottar Castle and the Bass Rock chronicled in the well-known lines of his friend, Dr. Longmuir of Aberdeen. Indeed the latter had for him peculiar associations through one of the Ross-shire worthies in the times of Charles II.—James Fraser of Brea;—for, when the sun set on the upland farm on which he had been born, Miller knew that it was time to collect his tools at the end of his day's labour. In 1847, when he visited the rock on the geological expedition which he has commemorated by his paper on the structure of the Bass, his thoughts again reverted to Fraser, and to two other captives from his own district, Mackilligen of Alness and Hog of Kiltearn. His uncle James had at an early period introduced him to Burns and Fergusson, while from his boyish days the old novel of Smollett, *Humphrey Clinker*, had been no less familiar than from the pages of *David Copperfield* we know it to have been to Dickens. It was, therefore, with no small interest that he caught his first view of Arthur Seat and the masts of the shipping

in the harbour of Leith. It was still the veritable Auld Reekie' of Fergusson, preserving its quaint distinctiveness by the happy blending of the divisions of the old town and the new—the old town through which, says Lockhart, the carriage of Scott would creep at the slowest of paces, driven by the most tactful and discriminating of Jehus, while every gable and buttress in what a recent prosaic English guide-book denominates the most dilapidated street in Europe would crowd its storied memories upon the novelist and poet of the *Chronicles of the Canongate*. To the last, like Carlyle, he preserved the memory, ever a landmark to the patriotic Scot, of his first day in the old 'romantic town' of Sir Walter, and of his impressions of the most picturesque of European capitals.

## CHAPTER II

'I view yon Empress of the North  
Sit on her hilly throne.'

SCOTT.

### IN EDINBURGH—THE CROMARTY BANK

HE had not long to experience what Gilbert Burns said was to his brother the saddest of all sights, that of a man seeking work. He had called on the town-clerk to see whether some means could be devised of setting himself free from the property when, on mentioning his occupation, he was not only told the prospect of a sale was not so hopeless as he had expected, but was introduced to a builder erecting a mansion-house in the south of Edinburgh. He lodged in the village of Niddry Mill, and found his experience of life among metropolitan labourers the very reverse of favourable.

His not very high opinion of the working classes, for, as we shall see, Miller remained a Whig to the last with a wholesome horror for Radicals and Chartists, was doubtless due to the circumstances under which he found himself, and not to any feeling of superiority on his part. The social condition of the working classes was then on the eve of transition, and the organisation

of even skilled labour was but in a rudimentary condition. In Edinburgh at least, the better class of mechanics sought within the walls of the city a more remunerative sphere for their labour, so that it was only the inferior body of workmen that was found on the outskirts. At first, he was subjected to a good deal of low and petty tyranny from his fellow-labourers, which was not calculated to improve his opinion of the class. Some slight relief, however, he managed to find in the new geological surroundings—the carboniferous deposits—and by observation and theory he made his way to some good results in his own science, at a time when there was no map, manual, or even geological primer in existence. The policies of Niddry and walks in the ruins of Craigmillar were a solace from the drunken and intemperate habits of the men, whose forty-eight shillings for the fortnight's wage were soon consumed by Sunday drives to Roslin or Hawthornden, or by drinking bouts in the lower rookeries of the High Street. There still largely prevailed the convivial habits such as Fergusson has described as characteristic of the Edinburgh of his day, the tavern 'jinks' alluded to by Scott in *Guy Mannering*, and by Lockhart in his *Life of Burns*. In the taverns the landlords kept a cockpit or a badger as a necessary part of their attraction. Employment being constant through the pressure of the building mania prevalent throughout this year, the masters were largely at the mercy of the men, so that strikes were rife and the demands of the workers

exorbitant. Altogether it was no favourable school for Miller to learn regard for his own class. Again and again, to the end, do we find not undeserved denunciations of the dangers of Chartism, and his own reiterated belief that for the skilled workman there is no danger, and for the thriftless no hope.

The collier villages round Niddry have long since disappeared. The seams have for all practical purposes been worked out, or have been given up as unprofitable. There he found the last surviving remains of slavery in Scotland, for the older men of the place, though born and bred 'within a mile of Edinburgh toun,' had yet been born slaves. The modern reader will find much curious information upon this subject in Erskine's *Institutes* ; but, in passing, we may recall the fact that Sir Walter Scott has mentioned the case of Scott of Harden and his lady, who had rescued by law a tumbling-girl who had been sold by her parents to a travelling mountebank, and who was set at liberty after an appeal to the Lords, against the decision of the Chancellor. Scott was assoilzied ; but, even as late as 1799, an Act of Parliament had to be passed dealing specially with this last remnant of feudal slavery—the salters and the colliers of Scotland. The old family of the Setons of Winton had, along with others, exercised great political influence and pressure on the Court of Session, and had repeatedly managed to defeat or evade measures of reform. A law had even been passed enacting that no collier or salter, without a certificate

from his last place, could find work, but should be held as a thief and punished as such, while a later ordinance was that, as they 'lay from their work at Pasche, Yule and Whitsunday, to the great offence of God *and prejudice of their masters,*' they should work every day in the week except at Christmas! Clearly there was no Eight Hours Bill in Old Scotland.

His lodging was a humble one-roomed cottage in Niddry, owned by an old farm-servant and his wife. The husband, when too old for work, had been discharged by his master, whose munificence had gone the length of allowing residence in the dilapidated building, on the understanding that he was not to be held liable for repairs. The thatch was repaired by mud and turf gathered from the roadside, and in this crazy tenement the old man and his wife, both of whom had passed through the world without picking up hardly a single idea, were exposed to the biting east winds of the district. A congenial fellow-lodger was fortunately found in the person of another workman, one of the old Seceders, deep in the theology of Boston and Rutherford, and such works as had formed the reading of his uncles in Cromarty, for at this time the sense of religion, at least among the humbler classes, was well-nigh confined to the ranks of dissent. Many of the inhabitants of the place were or had been nominal parishioners of 'Jupiter' Carlyle of Inveresk. But the doctor had not been one to do much for the social or religious advance of his people. Jupiter, or 'Old

Tonans,' as he was called from sitting to Gavin Hamilton the painter for his portrait of Jupiter, had been the fanatical defender of the theatre at a time when his friend John Home, the writer of *Douglas*, had been compelled by public opinion to seek relief from pulpit duties, and a more fitting sphere for his rants of 'Young Norval on the Grampian Hills' in the ranks of the laity. Carlyle and his friend Dr. Hugh Blair were constant patrons of the legitimate drama in the old playhouse in the Canongate, when the burghers at night would 'dauner hame wi' lass and lantern' after the manner described with such power by Scott in the Tolbooth scene of *Rob Roy*. On one occasion, the doctor had, for once in his long life, to play the part of non-intrusionist, when he repelled vigorously with a bludgeon the attempt of some wild sparks to force an entry into his box! Missions he denounced in the spirit of a fanatical supporter of the repressive régime of Pitt and Dundas. He trusted to the coming of Christ's Kingdom by some lucky accident or sleight of hand, 'as we are informed it shall be in the course of Providence.' He had no belief in 'a plan which has been well styled visionary.' In the closing years of his own life, the very slight modicum of zeal for the discharge of his ministerial duties ebbed so low that he left these entirely to an assistant, and spent the Sunday on the Musselburgh race-course. Yet this is the man whom Dean Stanley with exquisite infelicity selects as one of the heroes of the Church of Scotland.

In the picture of old 'Jupiter' there is something that recalls the belief of the erratic Lord Brougham, when he voted against the Veto Act and the right to protest against unsuitable presentees, from fear that it might end in 'rejecting men too strict in morals and too diligent in duty to please our vitiated tastes!' Carlyle's *Autobiography* is one of the most instructive of books; like the similar disclosure by Benvenuto Cellini, it is the presentation of a man who is destitute of a moral sense.

Although in the pulpits of the metropolis Moderatism was but only too well represented, there were yet some striking exceptions. Sir Walter Scott, whose feelings led him strongly in the direction of the Latitudinarian party, has yet drawn in *Guy Mannering* an admirable sketch of Dr. John Erskine, the colleague of Principal Robertson in the Greyfriars, and for long the leader of the Evangelical party in the Church of Scotland. Some of the members of that party were gladly heard by Miller, but his greatest delight he confesses to have been in hearing the discourses of the old Seceder, Dr. Thomas M'Crie. 'Be sure,' said his uncles to him on leaving Cromarty, 'and go to hear M'Crie.' The doctor was no master of rhetoric or of pulpit eloquence, but the doctrine was the theology of the true descendant of the men of Drumclog and Bothwell. Nothing is more characteristic of the university system of Scotland than that the greatest ecclesiastical scholar she could produce was to be found in a humble seceding chapel at the foot of Carrubber's Close. In Scotland, at least

within the present century, no more influential book has been published than his *Life of Knox*, which silently made its appearance in 1811. In the revival of ecclesiastical and national feeling in the country the book will ever remain a classic and a landmark. There it occupies the place which, in the field of classical and historical scholarship, is taken by Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer*. Lord Jeffrey could truly declare that to fit one's-self for the task of even a reviewer of M'Crie, the special reading of several years would be necessary. Its influence was at once felt. The 'solemn sneer' of the Humes, Gibbons, Robertsons, and Tytlers, and, be it mentioned with regret, of even Scott in that unworthy squib against the religion of his country, *Old Mortality*, had done much, at least among the *literati* and the upper classes, to obliterate and sap a belief or knowledge of the great work which had been accomplished for civil liberty by the early reformers; but now the school of flimsy devotees of Mary, Montrose and Claverhouse, with its unctuous retention of the sneer (or, historically meant, compliment) of the Merry Monarch as to Presbyterianism being no fit religion for a gentleman, the school whose expiring flicker is seen in Aytoun's *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*, was for ever exploded by the research of M'Crie. It was in an unlucky hour that Scott ventured a reply to the strictures of his reviewer. Never was humiliation more deep or more bitterly felt by the novelist. The novel of Scott is about as gross a caricature as 'Carrion'

Heath's *Life* of Oliver Cromwell, and for the historical restoration of the great Reformer, M'Crie has done in his book what Carlyle, in his *Letters of Cromwell*, has for ever effected for the true presentation of the Protector.

In the bookstalls of the city he would pick up some new additions to his shelf. At odd hours, too, he would hang about Castle Street in the hope of seeing Sir Walter Scott. The capital at this time, though sadly shorn of its old literary coteries in the days of Burns, still numbered such men as Jeffrey, Cockburn, Dugald Stewart, and Professor Wilson; and he did manage, one evening, to spend some hours with a cousin in Ambrose's, where the famous club used to hold their meetings in a room below. But none of these faces was he then destined to know in the flesh, and the 'pride of all Scotsmen' whom Carlyle met in the Edinburgh streets, 'worn with care, the joy all fled,' had passed away the next time when Miller visited the capital.

Work, we have seen, was plentiful in the town. The great fire had swept Parliament Close and the High Street, carrying with it the steeple of the old Tron, and many of the lofty tenements that formed such a feature of Old Edinburgh. But he was feeling the first effects of the stone-cutters' disease, and his lungs, affected by the stone dust, threatened consumption. He states that few of his class reached the age of forty through the trouble, and not more than one in fifty ever came to forty-five. But circumstances fortunately

enabled him at this critical juncture to leave work for a time. The house on the Coalhill had turned out better than was expected, and, with a clear balance of fifty pounds in his pocket, he could set sail for Cromarty, where, after a weary seven days' voyage through fog and mist, he was met on landing by his uncles. Not for ten years, and then under very different circumstances, was he again to see Edinburgh.

During this period of convalescence he experienced a religious change, leading to positions from which he never saw reason to recede. 'It is,' he says, 'at once delicate and dangerous to speak of one's own spiritual condition, or of the emotional sentiments on which one's conclusions regarding it are so often doubtfully founded. Egotism in the religious form is perhaps more tolerated than any other, but it is not on that account less perilous to the egotist himself. There need be, however, less delicacy in speaking of one's beliefs than of one's feelings.' This last remark is eminently characteristic at once of the individual and of the national type of severe reticence on internal religious experience. This may serve to throw some light on the taunt flung by Dr. Johnson, in one of his most boisterous moods in Skye, at the head of Boswell. 'Can you,' he asked, 'name one book of any value on a religious subject written by the Scottish clergy?' Johnson does not seem to be dwelling on specifically theological works; he has rather in his mind the manuals of a homiletic or devotional order, in which he

rather wildly asserts 'the clergy of England to have produced the most valuable works in theory and practice.' It might fairly have been retorted on Johnson that, were this so, the physicians at least had ministered but poorly to themselves, by quoting to him his own remark that he had never once met with a sincerely religious English clergyman; but Bozzy, patriotic for once, fell upon the defence of faithful discharge of pulpit ministrations and poor endowments. It might have been wiser to have fallen back on the long and militant struggle of the Church of Scotland for her existence, wiser still to have based the defence on national and psychological grounds. Nothing in the Scottish character is more remarkable than the absence of the feeling that led Luther and Wesley to a constant introspection, or at least to its frank outward expression and effusive declaration of their spiritual state. Some little knowledge of this national trait we think would have saved much windy and remote declamation about fanaticism, gloomy austerity, and enthusiasm—that mental bugbear of the eighteenth century, and well-nigh sole theological stock-in-trade of the gentlemanly and affected school of Hume and Robertson. The absence of anything like mysticism either in the nation or in its theology has been, therefore, unfavourable to the appearance of any cheap or verbal pietism. Calvinism, it may be added, is poor in comparison with Lutheranism, poorer still when contrasted in this respect with the Roman Church; for, while the former has Behmen

and Swedenborg, and the latter many names such as Guyon and Rosmini among a host, Scotland has nothing of this kind, unless in the case of Erskine of Linlathen or Campbell of Row. The reason for this would seem to be that Calvinism has both a religious and a political side. As a philosophic creed, at least in details, it affords a completeness of presentation that leaves no room or indeed desire to pass behind the veil and dwell on the unknowable and the unknown.

Miller, at all events, found that hitherto his life had lacked a 'central sun,' as he expresses it, round which his feelings and intellect could anchor themselves. This he found by a curiously instructive combination of historical and geological reasoning. Professor Blackie has pointed out that the true secret of the vitality of the old Paganism and its logical internal consistency simply lay in the fact of the great humanity of the deities it created. This, also, as Miller himself no less clearly shows, is at the bottom of the enduring element in the lower reaches of Catholicism. 'There is,' says our Scottish Neander, Rabbi John Duncan, 'an old cross stone of granite by the roadside as you wind up the hill at Old Buda, in Hungary, upon which a worn and defaced image of our Saviour is cut, which I used often to pass. The thorough woebegoneness of that image used to haunt me long—that old bit of granite, the ideal of human sorrow, weakness and woebegoneness. To this day it will come back before me—always with that dumb gaze of perfect calmness—no

complaining—the picture of meek and mute suffering. I am a Protestant and dislike image-worship, yet never can I get that statue out of my mind.’ This, then, to Miller formed the ‘central sun’—‘the Word made flesh ;’ not merely as a received mental doctrine, but as a fact laid hold of, and round which other facts find their true position and explanation. ‘There may be,’ he allows, ‘men who, through a peculiar idiosyncrasy of constitution, are capable of loving, after a sort, a mere abstract God, unseen and unconceivable ; though, as shown by the air of sickly sentimentality borne by almost all that has been said and written on the subject, the feeling in its true form must be a very rare and exceptional one. In all my experience of men I never knew a genuine instance of it. The love of an abstract God seems to be as little natural to the ordinary human constitution as the love of an abstract sun or planet.’

No less interesting are his arguments from the geological position. It was a difficulty which had long lain heavy on the mind of Byron when, the reader may remember, in his last days in 1823 he beat over much theological and metaphysical jungle with the Scottish doctor Kennedy—the greatness of the universe and the littleness of the paragon of animals man, and the consequent difficulty of satisfactorily allowing a redemptive movement in Heaven for man in all his petty weakness. Pascal had attempted to meet this by what Hallam calls ‘a magnificent lamentation’ and by a metaphysical subtlety, reasoning from this very small-

ness to his ultimate greatness. But the geological reasoning of Miller has the undoubted merit of being scientific and inductive. In geology the dominant note is, in one word, progress. 'There was a time in our planet,' and it will be noted that the argument is perfectly independent of the appearance of man, late with himself, early with Lyell, 'when only dead matter appeared, after which plants and animals of a lower order were made manifest. After ages of vast extent the inorganic yielded to the organic, and the human period began,—man, a fellow-worker with the Creator who first produced it. And of the identity of at least his intellect with that of his Maker, and, of consequence, of the integrity of the revelation which declares that he was created in God's own image, we have direct evidence in his ability of not only conceiving of God's own contrivances, but even of reproducing them, and this not as a mere imitator, but as an original thinker.' Man thus, as Hegel says, re-thinks Creation. But higher yet the tide of empire takes its way. The geologist is not like the Neapolitan thinker, Vico, with his doctrine of recurring cycles in man. The geologist 'finds no example of dynasties once passed away again returning. There has been no repetition of the dynasty of the fish—of the reptile—of the mammal. The long ascending line from dead matter to man has been a progress Godwards—not an asymptotical progress, but destined from the first to furnish a point of union; and occupying that point as true God and true man, as Creator

and created, we recognise the adorable Monarch of all the future.' Such an argument is indeed a reach above the vaguely declamatory theory of Swinburne of man being the master of all things, and above the theory of Feuerbach that finds God merely in the enlarged shadow projected by the Ego.

His somewhat impaired strength led him to think of a livelihood through little jobs of monumental stonework in a style superior to that introduced as yet into the countryside, and to this period of observation of the Scottish character acquired through living in the vicinity of farm-houses, villages, churchyards, as the varying means of lodging were afforded him, he ascribed much of the knowledge which he turned to so good an editorial account. In the company, too, of the parish minister Stewart he was happy, for, according to his own conviction and the testimony of many others, he was a man of no ordinary acuteness and of unquestioned pulpit ability. Indeed, Miller never hesitated to declare that for the fibre of his whole thinking he was more indebted to Chalmers and to this almost unknown Cromarty minister than to any two other men. Stewart's power seems to have lain in the detection of subtle analogies and in pictorial verbal power, in which he resembled Guthrie. In an obituary notice in *The Witness* of Nov. 13, 1847 he dwells with affection on the man, and illustrates admirably the type of intellect and its dangers. 'Goldsmith,' he observes, 'when he first entered upon his literary career, found that all the

good things on the side of truth had been already said ; and that *his* good things, if he really desired to produce any, would require all to be said on the side of paradox and error. Poor Edward Irving formed a melancholy illustration of this species of originality. His stock of striking things on the side of truth was soon expended ; notoriety had meanwhile become as essential to his comfort as ardent spirits to that of the dram-drinker ; and so, to procure the supply of the unwholesome pabulum, without which he could not exist, he launched into a perilous ocean of heterodoxy and extravagance, and made shipwreck of his faith. Stewart's originality was not the originality of opening up new vistas in which all was unfamiliar, simply because the direction in which they led was one in which men's thought had no occasion to travel and no business to perform. It was the greatly higher ability of enabling men to see new and unwonted objects in old familiar directions.' For sixteen years Miller sat under his ministry, and for twelve was admitted to his closest intimacy.

But in time work of even the 'Old Mortality' order grew scarce. Accordingly, in the summer of June 1828, he visited Inverness, and inserted in the local papers an advertisement for employment. He felt that he could execute such commissions with greater care and exactness than were usual, and in a style that could be depended upon for correct spelling. He mentions himself the case of the English mason who mangled Proverbs xxxi. 10 into the bewildering abbreviation that

'A virtuous woman is 5s. to her husband,' and he might also have mentioned the case of the statue to George II. in Stephen's Green, Dublin, erected doubtless under municipal supervision, and which yet in the course of a brief Latin inscription of thirteen lines can show more than one mistake to the individual line. He had the curious, yet perhaps after all not unpractical, idea that his scheme for employment might be materially improved by his sending a copy of verses to the paper, in the belief that the public would infer that the writer of correct verse could be a reliable workman. But nothing came of this. In justice to the editor it may be allowed that the versification, if easy, was nothing remarkable, and felicity of epithets may be no guarantee for perfection of epitaphs. The reflection, however, came to him that there was no advantage to be won in thus, as he says, scheming himself into employment. It was not congenial, and walking 'half an inch taller' along the streets on the strength of this resolution, he was actually offered the Queen's shilling, or the King's to be chronologically correct, by a smart recruiting sergeant of a Highland regiment who from the powerful physique of the man had naturally inferred the possession of a choice recruit.

He determined, accordingly, to face the worst and publish. He made a hasty selection of his verses through the last six years and approached the office of the *Inverness Courier*. This was a highly fortunate opening, for that paper was, then and up to 1878,

edited by Robert Carruthers of Dumfries, who had been appointed editor of the *Courier* in the very same year of Miller's visit. His *Life of Pope* published in 1853 is still a standard production, and altogether Carruthers was one of the ablest editors in Scotland, and his paper which was edited on Liberal lines was a very powerful organ in his day. The friendship then begun lasted till the death of Miller unbroken, and was mutually advantageous. While he was still in the Highland capital he received word of the fatal illness of his uncle James, and his first work on his return was a neat tombstone for this close friend of his father and worthy to whom he was so deeply indebted for much of his own subsequent distinction.

His volume of verse under the title of *Poems Written in the Leisure Hours of a Journeyman Mason* issued slowly in 1829 from the press, and its appearance in the disillusionising medium of black and white convinced him that after all his true vocation was not to be found in poetry, for many lines which had appeared as tolerable, if not more, to the writer in the process of composition were now robbed of their charm by commission to print. Indeed, at no time does his versification rise beyond fluent description. It lacks body and form, and was really in his case nothing but a sort of rudimentary stratum on which he was to rear a very strong and powerful prose style. He was lacking in ear, and he confessed to an organ that recognised with difficulty the difference of the bagpipe and the big

drum. The critics were not very partial to the venture. The tone of the majority was that of the *Quarterly* upon Keats, and the autocrats of poetical merit declared that he was safer with his chisel than on Parnassus. One little oasis, however, in the desert of depreciation did manage to reach him in a letter, through his friend Forsyth of Elgin, from Thomas Pringle of Roxburgh who had seen the book. In early days the poet had been a clerk in the Register House of Edinburgh, where his *Scenes of Teviotdale* had secured him an introduction to Scott, who extended to him the same ready support which he had bestowed on Leyden. By his influence he was appointed editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*, and later on emigrated with a party of relatives to the Cape, where his unsparing denunciations of the colonial policy in its treatment of the natives, and his advocacy of what would now be called the anti-Rhodes party brought him into complications with the officials in Downing Street and the colonial authorities. Poor Pringle!—among the one-song writers, the singers of the one lilt that rises out of a mass of now forgotten verse, his name is high, and he has won for himself an abiding niche in the hearts of his countrymen by his *Emigrant's Lament*, where he touches with a faultless hand the scenery of 'bonnie Teviotdale and Cheviot mountains blue.'

The volume of verses was not without its more immediate results in a local circle. It brought him under the notice of Sir Thomas Dick Lauder of

Relugas, who is now remembered by his *Wolf of Badenoch*—a not quite unsuccessful effort at bending the bow of Ulysses, though without the dramatic force of Scott. By Carruthers he was introduced to Principal Baird, and thus a link with the past was effected through a man who had edited the poems of Michael Bruce, had befriended Alexander Murray for a short period the occupant of the Oriental chair in Edinburgh, and been a patron of Pringle and a close friend of Scott. By Baird he was strongly pressed to venture on a literary life in the capital, but the time was not propitious, and he wisely resolved to devote himself to several years of accumulation and reflection before he should embark on a vocation for which he had no great liking, and in which, even to the last, he had but little belief. For an ordinary journalist he would indeed have been as little qualified as Burns when offered a post on Perry's *Morning Chronicle*. The justness of his resolution was fully shown when the opportunity found him, and he was then fully prepared for the work he was to do. He was induced by the Principal to draw up for him a brief sketch of his life, and of this a draft bringing it up to 1825 was composed and sent to Edinburgh.

There existed at this time in the North the remains of a little coterie of ladies, numbering among its members Henry Mackenzie's cousin,—Mrs. Rose of Kilravock, whom Burns had visited on his Highland tour, Lady Gordon Cumming, and Mrs. Grant of

Laggan, whose once well-known *Letters from the Mountains* have yielded in popularity to her song of *Highland Laddie*, which commemorates the departure in 1799 of the Marquis of Huntly with Sir Ralph Abercromby. By none of them, however, was he more noticed than by Miss Dunbar of Boath, who occupies in his early correspondence the place taken in the letters of Burns by Mrs. Dunlop. During his visits to this excellent lady he explored the curious sand-dunes of Culbin which still arrest the attention of the geologist and traveller in his rambles by the Findhorn. By Miss Dunbar he was pressed to embark on literature, while Mrs. Grant was of the opinion that he might follow the example of Allan Cunningham, who was engaged in the studio of Chantrey. But such patronage was in his case no less wisely exercised than admitted, nor was his the nature to be in any way spoiled by it; his self-reliant disposition suffered no such baneful effects as were felt by the much weaker nature of Thom of Inverurie, the one lyrical utterance of Aberdeenshire, or by Burns in the excitement of his Edinburgh season. He even became a town councillor, though he admits that his masterly inactivity was such as led him to absent himself pretty wholly from the duties, whose onerous nature may be inferred when the most important business before the council was, on one occasion, clubbing together a penny each to pay a ninepenny postage in the complete absence of town funds.

Into his life at this period a new vision was introduced

through the appearance on the scene of a young lady whom he was afterwards to make his wife. Sauntering through the wood on the hill overlooking the Cromarty Firth he met Miss Lydia Fraser, who was engaged in reading 'an elaborate essay on Causation.' The reader may remember—with feelings, we hope, of contrition for Mr. Lang's railway lyric on the *fin de siècle* students of Miss Braddon and Gaboriau, and for the degenerate tendencies of the age,—the curiously fitting parallel in which the geologist Buckland met in a Devonshire coach, his future wife, Miss Morland, deep in a ponderous and recently issued folio of Cuvier, into which even he himself had not found time to dip! Miller was ten years the senior of his young friend, whose father had been in business in Inverness, and whose mother had retired to Cromarty to live in a retired way upon a small annuity, added to by her daughter's private pupils. As a girl Miss Fraser had been a boarder in the family of George Thomson, whose *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs*, enriched by the hand of Burns with about a hundred songs, forms an abiding monument of their joint taste and judgment. The acquaintance ripened into intimacy and an agreement that for three years they were to make Scotland their home, when, should nothing then turn up they were to emigrate and try their fortune in America. But fortunately an opening occurred which was to retain him at home for the work he was so naturally fitted to perform.

Cromarty had hitherto been without a bank. Now,

through the representation of local landowners and traders, the Commercial Bank of Scotland was induced to extend one of its branches to the town. The services of a local shipowner were secured for the post of agent, and Miller was offered the place of accountant. It was necessary, of course, that he should qualify himself for his new duties, and so he sailed to Leith to acquire his initiation at Linlithgow. He was now in his thirty-second year.

Before leaving Cromarty he had been engaged upon his *Scenes and Legends* of the traditional history of the country, and on his forwarding his manuscript to Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, to whom it is dedicated, he was invited by the hospitable baronet to meet Mr. Adam Black the publisher, whose long retention of the copyright of the Waverley Novels has shed distinction on the firm of which he was the head. By him very generous terms were offered, and Miller by his venture realised £60 over his second book, which still seems to enjoy in its thirteenth edition no slight share of popularity. He was even pressed by Sir Thomas to make his own house at Grange his residence while in the south, but, Linlithgow having been already fixed upon he took his passage in the fly-boat running on the canal between Edinburgh and Glasgow and soon 'reached the fine old burgh as the brief winter day was coming to a close, and was seated next morning at my desk, not a hundred yards from the spot on which Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh had taken his stand when he shot the Good Regent.' At

first he was rather diffident of his ability for the work, the swiftness of mechanical summation never to the end coming to him perfectly natural; though, in the course of a brief two months' absence from Cromarty, he was able to join the bank with such a working acquaintance with the details of the business that, when the policy of Sir Robert Peel threatened an attack upon the circulation of the one-pound note, he was competent to publish a series of articles, *Words of Warning to the People of Scotland*, in which he defended the cash credit system of Scottish banking. This had before been fully expounded by Hume and Scott, and Miller could show its peculiar ability for enabling men to 'coin their characters should they be good ones, even should houses, ships, and furniture be wanting.' In the years to come his experience enabled him to write his own business and commercial leaders in his paper, but as yet his income did not exceed one hundred pounds, and he willingly joined in the continuation of Wilson's *Tales of the Borders*. This work has retained its popularity, though probably few are aware of the complexity of the authorship. As edited by Leighton, it preserves the names of several writers who occupy a more or less humble niche among the minor singers of Scotland, and in the list of contributors, along with Miller, to the work are found the two Bethunes, Alexander and John. He wrote for the *Tales* a good deal of rather poorly remunerated work, and his papers on Burns and Fergusson afford a

not unpleasing attempt to weave the lives of the two poets into an imaginative narrative. On their appearance, the papers were quoted as original reminiscences, though a more discriminating criticism could not have failed to detect their real nature. Miller possessed the logical and personal element too strong to merge his own individuality successfully in the characters of others. The dramatic faculty was deficient. Yet it was not quite an unfortunate attempt to thus anticipate such a sketch as Dr. Hutchison Stirling has so admirably worked out in his *Burns in Drama*.

Into a very different arena he was now to be drawn. Politically and ecclesiastically, it was a period of excitement. In 1829 Catholic Emancipation had no sooner been passed than O'Connell brought in his motions for the Repeal and the Tithe War. The latter was a protest by the Romanists against paying tithes for the maintenance of the Irish Church, whose incumbents were a mere outpost of the Tory and Episcopalian party, converting, as Lord Rosebery has said, nobody, and alienating everybody. On the withdrawal of Grey, and the fall of Peel, Lord Melbourne had carried on for years a sort of guerilla warfare with a varying majority, too dependent on the Irish vote to give general satisfaction. The Tithe Act, however, was passed, and this made the support of the English clergy in Ireland a charge upon rent. The position in which matters then stood with the Government will be clearly seen by a reference to the admirable speech of Macaulay, in May

1839, to the electors of Edinburgh. In Ross-shire, the tension of affairs had been rendered more acute by a wave of Tory reaction which induced the Church of Scotland to cast the weight of her influence against the Whigs; but the people, as has ever been the case upon such aberrations from the national policy, had steadily declined to follow this lead, although the endowment scheme for new chapels had been dealt with by the Whigs in a niggard and unsatisfactory way.

In Cromarty the cause of the Church was strong. Since the Revolution, the succession in the parish had been at once popular and able. The position taken up hitherto by Miller and his uncles had been a middle one. With strong hereditary attachment to the national establishment they united personal leanings which led them to a sympathy with the standpoint and the theology of the Seceders. But as yet Miller was, he says, 'thoroughly an Established man.' The revenues of the Church he regarded as the patrimony of the people; and he looked not unnaturally to a time 'when that unwarrantable appropriation of them, through which the aristocracy had sought to extend its influence, but which had served only greatly to reduce its power in the country, would come to an end.' Still he confesses that as yet there were no signs of what he would himself have desired to see—a general and popular agitation against patronage—though he noted with approval the 'revival of the old spirit in the Church.' The time had, however, come when he could hesitate no longer.

He saw with anxiety the decisions go against the Church in March 1838, and of the Lords in May 1839, the victory of his case by the presentee to Auchterarder, and the declaration of the illegality of the Veto Act of 1834. 'Now,' he says, 'I felt more deeply; and for at least one night—after reading the speech of Lord Brougham and the decision of the House of Lords in the Auchterarder case—I slept none.' Could he not, he reasoned with himself, do something in the hour of danger to rescue the patrimony of his country out of the hands of an alien aristocracy, which since 1712 had obstinately set itself in hereditary opposition to the people? In the morning he wrote a letter addressed to Lord Brougham, the grandson of the historian Robertson, to which we shall have occasion later on to refer in detail. This admirable piece of reasoning and clever statement—the result of a week's work—was sent to Robert Paul, the manager of the Commercial Bank in Edinburgh. By him its value was quickly seen, and by the strenuous advice of Dr. Candlish it was at once put in print. Four editions in the course of well-nigh as many weeks proved its excellence; and it was fortunate enough to secure encomiums from two men so different in their leanings as Daniel O'Connell and Mr. Gladstone.

The writer who could at such a critical position produce a pamphlet of this nature was, of course, a marked man. The leaders of the Evangelical party of the Church in Edinburgh had been engaged in a scheme

for the starting of a paper. From the press of the capital, and from such provincial organs as *The Aberdeen Herald* and *The Constitutional*, as edited by Mr. Adam and Mr. Joseph Robertson, the 'travelled thane Athenian Aberdeen' who drifted into the Crimean War later on, and who drifted with the Parliament House party in a reactionary ecclesiastical policy at this time, had been content to draw such scanty information as he ever possessed on the real issues at stake in the Church of Scotland. Indeed, his lordship had gone so far as to taunt the Evangelical Party as composed but of the intellectual *débris* of the country, and of the 'wild men' in the Church. Sir Robert Peel, who really knew nothing of the intricacies of the question, was content to believe that there was a conspiracy to defeat the law and to rend the constitution. But the ignorance of the Premier and the taunt of Lord Aberdeen came but with an ill grace from them when flung against such men as Sir David Brewster, Chalmers, Welsh, Guthrie, Bonar, Duff, and Miller, and the whole intellectual force of the country at large. Indeed, to the very last, the indecision and the ignorance as to the state of the country shown by Lord Aberdeen were but the natural results of his holding his ecclesiastical conscience in fee from such men as Robertson of Ellon, Paull of Tullynessle, and Pirie of Dyce—these bucolic personages, 'like full-blown peony-roses glistening after a shower,' whose triple and conjunct capacity, joined to that of their master, might have been cut, to borrow the eulogy of Sir James

Mackintosh upon Burke, out of the humblest of their rivals and never have been missed. It was really high time that something should be done, when Lord Medwyn could pose as an ecclesiastical scholar by a few garbled quotations from Beza, professing to set in their true light the views held by the Reformers upon patronage; and when these very extracts, together with the copious errors of the press, had been worked up by Robertson of Ellon to be quoted by Lord Aberdeen third-hand as an embodiment of oracular learning and wisdom!

No apology, therefore, need here be made for the inclusion of an extract from that remarkable work by Dr. William Alexander—*Johnny Gibb*—to which we have before had occasion to refer, and which must ever rank as the classic of the movement with which Miller's own name is associated. It deals with the sort of windy pabulum then served up by the Aberdeen papers to obscure the real issues, and it describes in the raciest and most mellow style of the lamented writer the meeting in the schoolhouse of Jonathan Tawse, at whose hospitable board are assembled the three farmers and the local doctor. Readers in the North of Scotland can from their own knowledge read much between the lines; and they will not forget that Mr. Adam and Mr. Joseph Robertson were the only two men who could be found with effrontery sufficient to shake hands with Mr. Edwards in the all-too notorious induction at Marnoch.

‘Jonathan took up an Aberdeen newspaper, wherein were recorded certain of the proceedings of the Evangelical ministers, who were visiting different parishes for the purpose of holding meetings. First he put on his “specs,” and next he selected and read out several paragraphs, with such headings as “THE SCHISMATICS IN A——,” “THE FIRE-RAISERS IN B——,” and so on, winding up this part with the concluding words of one paragraph, which were these :—“So ended this compound of vain, false, and seditious statements on the position of the Church, and which must have been most offensive to every friend of truth, peace, or loyalty who heard it.”

“‘I say Amen to ilka word o’ that,” said Dr. Drogemweal. “Sneevlin’ hypocrites. That’s your non-intrusion meetin’s. It concerns every loyal subject to see them pitten doon.”

“‘Here’s fat the editor says, in a weel-reason’t, and vera calm an’ temperate article,” continued Jonathan—“he’s speakin’ o’ the fire-raisers”: “How much reliance could be placed on the kind of information communicated by these reverend gentlemen will be readily imagined by such of our readers as have read or listened to any of the harangues which the schismatics are so liberally dealing forth. If simple laymen, in pursuing objects of interest or of ambition, were to be guilty of half the misrepresentations of facts and concealment of the truth which are now, it would seem, thought not unbecoming on the part of *Evangelical* ministers, they would be justly scouted from society.” “That’s fat I ca’ sen’in the airrow straucht to the mark.”

“‘Seerly,” interposed Mains, who had been listening with much gravity.

“‘A weel-feather’t shaft, tae,” said Dr. Drogemweal.

“An’ it’s perfectly true, ilka word o’t. They’re nae better o’ the ae han’ nor incendiaries, wan’erin’ here an’ there to raise strife amo’ peaceable fowk; and syne their harangues—a clean perversion o’ the constitutional law, an’ veelint abuse o’ the institutions o’ the countra.”

How many specimens of that style of ‘calm and temperate article’ were produced in the North, no one with a recollection for either history or for humour need recall at this hour. Somewhat later, Miller could say in *The Witness* that in a few days he had clipped out of the papers what he had seen written against such a man of position and courtesy as Mr. Makgill Crichton of Rankeilour in the course of a fortnight. It amounted to eleven feet six inches when pieced together, and was for the most part gross abuse and vulgar personalities.

The hour, then, had come and the man. Miller was invited to Edinburgh to meet the leaders of the Evangelical party, and he was offered the position of editor of the newspaper, which started its first issue on January 15, 1840, appearing bi-weekly upon Wednesdays and Saturdays. At the end of the bank’s financial year, he was presented by his fellow-townsmen with a breakfast service of plate, and the presence of his uncle Alexander was to Miller a circumstance of peculiar satisfaction. In a few days later he was seated at the editorial desk. For sixteen years he was with undiminished success to edit *The Witness*. But here we pause. The conflict in which he was to engage calls for a special chapter. The question has been approached

from all sides, civil as well as ecclesiastical. But it is fitting that here, at least, an attempt be made to connect the struggle with the history and the peculiar mental and moral characteristics of the Scottish people. It will be seen that the question involves far-reaching, deep-rooted, and closely connected points of issue. It will therefore be the attempt of the next chapter to show the really national and democratic features of the conflict, and to briefly indicate how the civil and religious rights of the people, long before staked and won by the early Reformers, were again, when surrendered by an alien nobility, saved for them—from the point, at least, of abiding literature—by two men; who, sprung themselves from the people, the one the son of a Cromarty sailor and the other of an Aberdeenshire crofter, wrote the leaders in *The Witness* and *Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk*. The best years of Miller's own life, sixteen years of unceasing turmoil and overwork, were spent in making these issues abundantly clear to the people. No apology need then be made for an effort to reset these positions in their historical connection, and to exhibit the logical nexus of affairs from 1560 to 1843.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SCOTTISH CHURCH, 1560-1843—‘THE WITNESS’

‘The fate of a nation was riding that night.’

*Paul Revere's Ride*, LONGFELLOW.

WHEN Andrew Melville said to King James VI., ‘Sir, as divers times before have I told you, so now again must I tell you, there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland; there is King James, the head of the Commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member,’ he expressed what, from its foundation as an Establishment in 1560 till now, has been in every one of its constituent parts the belief and practice of the indomitable Kirk of Scotland.

These were words which the British Solomon was to remember. Over the border, where the obedient English clergy, who looked from the humblest curate to the highest dignitary to the throne alone for their support, professed to find in the pedantic pupil of the great Buchanan the wisdom of a present deity and regarded his slobbering utterances as ‘the counsels of a god,’

James found himself in more congenial society for the promulgation of his views on kingcraft which were to embroil the nation and drive his descendants from the throne. The preface to the Authorised Version of the Bible by the translators of 1611 shews the depth to which the Anglican clergy could sink. No wonder that James found such men ready tools to his hand. In their company he could complacently vapour about 'No bishop, no king,' or express his joy in finding himself for the first time in the company of 'holy and learned men.' When Melville, as professor of divinity at Sedan, was dying an exile in 1622 James was dismissing the two English houses of Parliament for what he was pleased to call an invasion of his prerogative; the rumours of the Spanish marriage were in the air, the first instalment of the royal legacy of kingcraft. 'No bishop, no king': The nation was to take him at his word, and to demonstrate pretty effectively that kingdoms can do without either—and both.

'Not a king—but a member;' 'in all matters ecclesiastical as well as civil head supreme'—the whole history of Scotland was to run for three hundred years in these grooves. This is the doctrine which, from 1560 till now, has in Scotland been known as the Headship of Christ. Without a correct understanding of this question, not as a mere metaphysical or theological figment, but as a reality most vitally 'within practical politics' carrying effects direct and visible into every corner of the national life, the history of Scotland must

of necessity be a sealed book—the play of *Hamlet* without the royal Dane. To the English reader this has been largely obscured, from the fact that the chief sources of information open to him are not such as present a rational or connected story. George Borrow found that Scott's caricature of *Old Mortality* was what Englishmen had in their minds, and that some thin romanticism about Prince Charles Edward was the end and substance of their knowledge. Yet such a presentation would be no less absurd than *Hudibras* would be for the men of the Long Parliament. Scott was too much occupied with the external and material conditions of the country, too much engrossed by obvious necessity of materials in the romantic element of Scottish history, and too little in sympathy with the spiritual and moral forces at work to present anything like a complete narrative, while his feudal sentiments were nourished by the almost entire lack of the political instinct. The ecclesiastical chapters in John Hill Burton's *History* are not equal to the main body of his work; and, if the *Lectures* of Dean Stanley are the characteristically thin production of one confessing to but a superficial knowledge of the vast literature of the field,' the *Ecclesiastical History* of Grub is only the work of a mere Episcopalian antiquary, and the lack of judgment and political insight appears on every page. 'It seems to me,' says Carlyle, 'hard measure that this Scottish man Knox, now after three hundred years, should have to plead like a culprit before the world,

intrinsically for having been, in such way as was then possible to be, the bravest of all Scotchmen'—harder still, say we, that the subject of Milton's great eulogy should be judged by minds of the notes-and-queries order, or by those of the class of Hume and Robertson, who have such a gentlemanly horror at everything that savours of enthusiasm as to miss the central point, the *coincidence* of civil and religious liberty.

'In every sense a man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him. A man's, or a nation of men's.' Yet we find Hume writing to Robertson that if the divine were willing to give up his Mary, the philosopher was willing to give up his Charles, and there would at least be the joint pleasure of seeing John Knox made completely ridiculous. 'Who,' writes Robertson to Gibbon, 'is Mr. Hayley? His Whiggism is so bigoted, and his Christianity so fierce, that he almost disgusts one with *two very good things!*' Christianity was then only a good thing when it had good things to offer to pluralists of the Warburtonian order. Yet these two garbled and distorted narratives are still the most widely known versions in England. Little wonder, therefore, is it that Carlyle should ask, 'I would fain know the history of Scotland; who can tell it me? Robertson, say innumerable voices; Robertson, against the world. I open Robertson; and find there, through long ages too confused for narrative, a cunning answer and hypothesis—a scandalous chronicle (as for some Journal of Fashion) of two persons: Mary Stuart, a Beauty, but

over light-headed ; and Henry Darnley, a Booby who had fine legs. Thus is History written.'

In England, the Reformation took place in a way quite different from that in which it was effected in Scotland. The strong hand of Henry VIII. piloted the nation for a time through a crisis, and for a space at least it would appear that the nation was content to surrender its religious conscience into the hands of the king. He attempted, says Macaulay with perfect truth, to constitute an Anglican church differing from the Roman Catholic on the point of the Supremacy, and on that alone. There can be little doubt that to the court of Henry the king was the head of both church and state, and that the power of the keys temporal as well as ecclesiastical resided in the Crown. So far did Cranmer carry out this idea that, regarding his own spiritual functions as having ceased with the death of Henry, he renewed his commission under Edward VI., and for mere denial of the Act of Supremacy More and Fisher were sent to the block. It is true that Elizabeth was induced to part with a good deal of this exaggerated prerogative, yet she still exercised such a domineering and inquisitorial power as threatened to unfrock any refractory creature of her creation. It was natural, therefore, that the church created almost exclusively by the will of the Crown should for her rights and privileges rest entirely upon the Crown. The people had never been consulted in her creation, and it was to the Crown alone that the clergy could look. Her constitution, her traditions,

and her government were all monarchical; and if, at first, she was moderate in her tone of adulation, it was easy to see that, led largely by interest, she would begin to assert the divine origin of the powers of the king, with the deduction of 'no bishop, no king' and of passive obedience, which made itself heard from the pulpits of Laud, Montagu, and Mainwaring, and in the treatise of Filmer.

Passing from the more servile ranks of the clergy to those of the laity it appeared as the party cry of a class. To many it has often appeared strange how such an absurd and illogical doctrine could become even the shibboleth of a political party. Yet at bottom the doctrine of the divine right of the king was not very unfavourable to the divine right of squires, and king and cavaliers were bound together by obvious ties of interest in the maintenance of the royal prerogative against the rising tide of political opposition. Holy Alliances in recent times have not found this doctrine strange to them, and a high elevation of the prerogative and the mitre was the very breath of existence to a church whose being depended on the stability of the throne. Passive obedience was a convenient cry for those who never dreamed that the breath of the king could unmake them as a breath had made. Never till James VII. began to oppress the clergy did they begin to see what was logically involved in their abject protestations of loyalty, and in their professions of turning the right cheek to the royal smiter. Only when the seven bishops were

sent to the Tower, not for any loyalty to the country or to the constitution, but through a selfish maintenance of their own interests as a class, did the Anglican body bethink themselves of resistance, and of texts that reminded them of the hammer of Jael and the dagger of Ehud no less than of the balm of the anointed of the Lord. History has repeated itself. The landed and clerical classes associated their triumph with the triumph of Episcopacy, and their humiliation with the triumph of the Independents. The exaltation of the prerogative, therefore, again made its appearance at the Restoration, to be shaken by the high-handed measures of James, and pass to extinction at the Revolution. The same thing has practically been seen in Spain. Spain, remarks Borrow, is not naturally a fanatical country. It was by humouring her pride only that she was induced to launch the Armada and waste her treasures in the wars of the Low Countries. But to the Spaniard, Catholicism was the mark of his own ascendancy; it was the typification of his elevation over the Moor. The Most Catholic King was therefore flattered to exalt the claims of the Holy See no less than the English clergy had exalted the prerogative of the king. Far different the condition of affairs in Scotland. When Knox landed at Leith, in May 1559, he found the whole people ripe for a change, so that by August of next year the Scottish Parliament could pass a resolution to abolish the Papacy with the entire consent of the nation, and in December 1560 the First General Assembly met.

Its laic element was strong and was emphasised from the beginning. To six ministers there were thirty-four elders, and it met by no sanction of the Crown, but by its own authority. At its second meeting, Maitland of Lethington could craftily raise the question as to the legality of such conventions without the consent of the Queen. It was retorted that, if they were dependent merely upon the Queen for their liberty of meeting, they would be deprived of the public preaching of the gospel. 'Take from us,' said Knox, 'the freedom of assemblies, and take from us the Gospel'; but it was left to her to send a commissioner. So early was the doctrine of the Headship maintained by the Church of Scotland. In 1560, no less than 1843, the question was clear. In 1557 they had resolved that the election of ministers, according to the custom of the primitive church, should be made by the people; and in the First Book of Discipline of 1560, re-enacted in 1578, it was laid down that 'it appertaineth to the people and to every several congregation to elect their minister, and it is altogether to be avoided that any man be violently intruded or thrust in upon any congregation.' The fabric was laid: three hundred years have not started a plank.

The difference of the Reformation in England and in Scotland at once emerges. Knox had the nation at his back; and, besides being, as Milton said, 'the Reformer of a nation,' he had found the people by mental temperament, or by concurrent historical reasons, anchored to a doctrinal system with a political side



which has coloured ever since the stream of its existence. Calvinism, in every one of its forms, exaggerated or diluted, has this double side. It is felt in this way. To a nation believing that the divine decree of election has singled out the individual, the claims of a church with the greatest of histories and the most unbroken of descents are of slight value. To the individual believing it is God's own immutable decree that has made his calling and election sure, the whole retinue of priests and priestly paraphernalia appears but an idle pageant. To the nation, and to the individual alike, regarding itself or himself as fellow-workers with God in the furtherance of His immutable decrees, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers have for ever lost their awe or a power to coerce. Wherever the belief has been carried these results have been seen. There has been, what Buckle failed completely to see, a rooted aversion to ecclesiasticism, and a no less rooted aversion to tyranny. And in no better words could the doctrinal and political principles be laid down than in the famous words of Andrew Melville which we have set at the head of this chapter.

Again, when Knox laid hold of the nation his schemes in their very first draft embraced the people as a whole. It was not a merely piecemeal or monarchical business as in England. The Reformers were not content with merely formulating an Act like Henry; they proceeded to carry out in detail their plans for a national system of education. They had no idea of setting up a church

of their own invention. There is something in the Scottish intellect, in this resembling the French, that seeks for the completest realisation in detail of its ideas. As Professor Masson has said, its dominant note is really not caution, with which it is so frequently credited, but *emphasis*. While the English Independents during the later years of the Civil War appear as either sectaries or as individualists, the contention of the Scots was ever for a national system. This feature in the character of the nation is really at the root of what Hallam calls the 'Presbyterian Hildebrandism' of the elder M'Crie. Johnson, too, could with some considerable truth say to Boswell, 'You are the only instance of a Scotchman that I have known who did not at every other sentence bring in some other Scotchman.' But this is the very feature that Buckle has overlooked, and it is this that explains how the new church spoke in the authoritative tones of the old; this, too, which explains how, outside of the waning Episcopalian sect, there are no dissenters in Scotland in the true sense. We have parties, not sects. While the Secession, the Relief, the Cameronians, the Burghers were all mere branches of the parent stock, retaining in detail its fundamental nature in discipline and worship, the established church in England finds itself face to face with organised and hostile dissent. So entirely has the national unity been preserved in Scotland that Professor Blackie has said, with no less truth than pith, that while Presbyterianism is the national and the rational dress of the land, Episcopacy is but the dress coat by which

the nakedness is hid of the renegade from the nation, and the apostate from its church. Dean Stanley found that 'the questionable idols' of the Episcopalian sect were Mary Queen of Scots, Montrose, and Dundee. These have never been the idols of the Scottish people: the last, indeed, occupies in its memory the peculiar niche of infamy.

The political side of the national religion is expressed no less clearly in facts. The Scottish Crown is held by a contract,<sup>1</sup> and the coronation oath is the deliberate expression of it. In his *De Jure Regni* in 1579, dedicated to the king, Buchanan had made this apparent to Europe, and in his *Lex Rex*, in 1644, Buchanan was reinforced by Rutherford in the doctrine that the people is the source of power, and his officers are merely *ministri regni non regis*, 'servants of the kingdom, not of the king.' Startling doctrine this to the slobbering vicegerent of God, conceding to the people acts to be revoked at his pleasure. In the light of ordinary facts, therefore, what are the national covenants of 1580 and 1638, but very simple Magna Chartas or Reform Bills with a religious colouring? One half of the statements

<sup>1</sup> For this important point in its bearing upon the position of the Cameronians, and the 'Testimony' of Richard Cameron at the market-place of Sanquhar, June 22, 1680, see Buchanan's *History*, xx. 36-47, and Milton's *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, with the coins of James VI. stamped in 1570. Thus, while James VII.'s creatures, the Bishops, maintained the 'divine right' of their creator, led by Paterson, the Archbishop of Glasgow, Dalrymple could carry the resolution on the constitutional question of tenure that the king had 'forfaulted the throne.'

of Hume and Robertson about fanaticism, austerity, gloom, enthusiasm, democracy, and popular ferocity, and all the bugbears of the writers so terribly 'at ease in Zion,' would be discounted by a simple regard for facts. When Leighton and Burnet went into the west in 1670 to try and induce the people to recognise the establishment of Charles, what did they find? Wranglings or harangues after the manner of Scott's Habbakuk Mucklewrath? 'The poor of the country,' says Burnet, 'came generally to hear us. We were amazed to see a poor commonalty so capable to argue upon points of government, and on *the bounds to be set to the power of the civil magistrate* and princes in matters of religion: upon all these topics they had texts of Scripture at hand, and were ready with their answers to everything that was said to them. This measure of knowledge was spread even among the meanest of them, their cottagers and servants.' Leighton might well have remembered the case of his own father. History loves not the Coriolani, says Mommsen, and Miller has well seized this incident to bring out the popular side of the national religion. To the question, in an inn at Newcastle, what the Scottish religion had done for the people, he could reply, 'Independently altogether of religious considerations, it has done for our people what your Societies for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and all your Penny and Saturday Magazines will never do for yours; it has awakened their intellects and taught them to think.'

But the exigencies of the romance-writer are often

the means of corrupting history, and the largest class of readers will ever prefer to read it, in the phrase of Macaulay, with their feet on the fender. To that class, therefore, the political crisis of 1638, one of no less magnitude than the French Revolution, will ever be obscured by airy talk about religious intolerance and popular fanaticism. The history of Scotland in consequence becomes either, as Carlyle said, a mere hunting-ground for intriguing Guises or else is left to the novelist with the Mucklewraths, wild men, and caricatures. Even yet the mere English reader of Hume and Robertson has not got beyond the phrases of 'iron reformers' and 'beautiful queens.' The intrepidity of Knox, like the conduct of Luther at the Diet, becomes material for the sentimentalist to decry or the latitudinarian to bewail. The courtly Dean Stanley approaches the maudlin in his remarks at this stage, and he thinks of Scott as he 'murmured the lay of Prince Charlie on the hills of Pausilippo, and stood rapt in silent devotion before the tomb of the Stuarts in St. Peter.' But the admirers of the greatest of all novelists will remember also no less his statement that he gave the heart without giving the head, and will even regard it as a merely temporary aberration, like his presence at Carlton House with the Prince Regent, where, says Lockhart with curious lack of humour, 'that nothing might be wanting, the Prince sang several capital songs!' The spell of Sir Walter should not blind us to the real and the false in the national story.

Eminently clear-headed and politically sound were the men of 1638, worthy compeers of the great men that sat in England's Long Parliament. The Jacobite Rebellions are a mere extraneous incident in the history of Scotland, and the events of 1638, 1698, and 1843 will show the peculiar spirit of the people in a fairer flowering. How curiously illusory are the generalisations of philosophers! Calculation, shrewdness, pawkiness—these are the traditional marks of the stage-Scotchman from the days of Smollett. But Buchanan's *perfervidum ingenium* is surely much truer, and mere calculation is just what is *not* the national mark. If her poverty and pride were seen in Darien, no less truly was her religious and political side seen in these other events. But the question of the Headship still awaits us. On the accession of William, the shattered remnants of the kirk were gathered together by Carstares after twenty-eight years of persecution: *nec tamen consumebatur*. Perhaps, in the circumstances under which both king and country found themselves, no other compromise could so well have been come to as that of 1690. The election was left in the hands of elders and the heritors, to be approved of by the people, leaving an appeal to the Presbytery. At the Union, Scotland seeing the danger to which she was exposed by her scanty band of forty-five members being swamped in the English or Tory phalanx—a danger to which every year subsequent has added but too evident a commentary—had exacted the most strenuous obligations for the

unalterable preservation of her ecclesiastical system. But five years witnessed the most shameless breach of public faith, by an Act which had the most ruinous effects, political and religious, upon the people. The Tories had come into power on the crest of the Sacheverel wave, and in 1712 Bolingbroke proceeded to carry out his scheme of altering the succession and securing the return of the Pretender. An Act of Toleration was passed for the Episcopalian dissenting sect in Scotland, and an oath of abjuration sought to be imposed upon the Scottish Church for the sake of exciting confusion. An Act restoring patronage was rushed through the House by the Tory squires, who composed five-sixths of the House of Commons. Against this the Whigs and Carstares protested vigorously, and appealed to the Treaty of Union, but appeal was lost upon the ignorant class, who were not overdrawn in the Squire Western of Fielding's novel. For a hundred years this Act bore evil fruits. The nobility of the land were only too ready to seize upon the poor spoils of the national endowment in order to renew their waning power in the country, and in so doing they managed to set themselves and their descendants in hereditary opposition to the great mass of the people. The English peerage has done much for the English people. In Scotland, it may be asked, which of the four Scottish Universities has had a farthing of the money of the nobility, and what have they done for the Church in any one of her branches?

In Miller's *Letter to Brougham* this cardinal point of 1712 is made clear :—

‘Bolingbroke engaged in his deep-laid conspiracy against the Protestant succession and our popular liberties ; and again the law of patronage was established. But why established? Smollett would have told your Lordship of the peculiarly sinister spirit which animated the last Parliament of Anne; of feelings adverse to the cause of freedom which prevailed among the people when it was chosen ; and that the Act which re-established patronage was but one of a series, all bearing on an object which the honest Scotch member who signified his willingness to acquiesce in one of those, on condition that it should be described by its right name—an Act for the Encouragement of Immorality and Jacobitism in Scotland—seems to have discovered. Burnet is more decided. Instead of triumphing on the occasion, he solemnly assures us that the thing was done merely “to spite the Presbyterians, who, from the beginning, had set it up as a principle that parishes had, from warrants in Scripture, a right to choose their ministers,” and “who saw, with great alarm, the success of a motion *made on design* to weaken and undermine their establishment” ; and the good Sir Walter, notwithstanding all his Tory prejudices, is quite as candid. The law which re-established patronage in Scotland—which has rendered Christianity inefficient in well-nigh half her parishes, which has separated some of her better clergymen from her Church, and many of her better people from her clergymen, the law through which Robertson ruled in the General Assembly, and which Brougham has eulogised in the House of Lords, that identical law formed, in its first enactment, no

unessential portion of a deep and dangerous conspiracy against the liberties of our country.'

The immediate result was seen in the conduct of the patrons. As the Regent Morton had established tulchan bishops and secured the revenues of the sees, the patrons now named such presentees as they deliberately saw would be unacceptable to the people, protected as they were by the appeal to the Presbytery, so that during the protracted vacancy they drew the stipend. No actual case of intrusion, however, seems to have occurred until 1725, but the rise of moderatism<sup>1</sup> within the Church gave too frequent occasion for such forced presentations as, we have seen, took place at Nigg, in 1756, in the days of Donald Roy, Miller's relative. The secessions of the Erskines in 1733 and of the Relief under Gillespie in 1752 were the results of intolerant Moderatism, and its long reign under Robertson the historian, lasted for well-nigh thirty years in the Assembly, till his withdrawal in 1780.

Were we to credit the eulogies of Dean Stanley and others upon Home, Blair, and Robertson, we should regard this as the golden age of the Church of Scotland. Robertson he describes as 'the true Archbishop of Scotland.' But there are men who seem fated, in the pregnant phrase of Tacitus, to make a solitude and call it peace. The reign of Robertson was simply coincident

<sup>1</sup> For the similar rise of the spirit in England see Mark Pattison's excellent paper in *Essays and Reviews*, 'Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750.'

with the very lowest spiritual ebb in the country, to which his own long régime had in no slight degree contributed. The Spaniard dates the decline and fall of his own country from the days of Philip II., *segundo sin segundo*, as Cervantes bitterly calls him, 'the second with (it was to be hoped) no successor.' Even in 1765, such had been the spread of religion outside the national establishment that the Assembly was forced to reckon with it. They found 'a hundred and twenty meeting-houses, to which more than a hundred thousand persons resorted.' Patronage was found, after debate, to be the cause. It is no tribute to Alva that he found the Low Countries a peaceful dependency of Spain and left them a free nation; none to the policy of 'thorough' that it sent Laud and Strafford to the block. An impartial verdict will be that Robertson undermined for ever the edifice which Carstares had reared.

An attempt has been recently made again to cast a glamour over the old Scottish moderates of the eighteenth century. Their admirers point to Watson the historian of Philip II., to Henry the historian of Britain, to Robertson, to Thomas Reid the philosopher, Home the dramatist, Blair the sermon-writer, Adam Ferguson, Hill of St. Andrews, and George Campbell of Aberdeen. Not even the Paraphrases have escaped being pressed into the field to witness to the literary and other gifts of Ogilvie, Cameron, Morrison, and Logan. But the merits of a class are not best seen

by the obtrusion of its more eminent members, but by the average. We do not judge the provincial governors of Rome by such men as the occasional Cicero and Rutilius, but by the too frequent repetition of men like Verres and Piso. Nor even in these very upper reaches will the Moderates bear a close inspection. No one now reads Home's *Douglas*. Young Norval has gone the way, as the critic says, of all waxworks, and curious is the fate of the great Blair : he lives not for the works upon which immortality was fondly staked, but for having given breakfasts to Burns in his Edinburgh days. 'I have read them,' says Johnson of these sermons ; 'they are *sermones aurei ac auro magis aurei*. I had the honour of first finding and first praising his excellencies. I did not stay to add my voice to that of the public. I love Blair's sermons, though the dog is a Scotchman and a Presbyterian, and everything he should not be.' This avalanche of laudation seems strange to the modern reader, who will find in them the rhetoric of Hervey's *Meditations on the Tombs*, united to a theology that could pass muster in a deistical writer. Burns, though he lent himself to be the squib-writer of the Ayrshire Moderates, was fully aware of the merely negative tenets of the school, and in his *Holy Fair* he asks

' What signifies his barren shine  
Of moral powers and reason ?  
His English style, and gestures fine  
Are a' clean out o' season.

Like Socrates or Antonine,  
Or some old pagan heathen,  
The moral man he does define,  
But ne'er a word of faith in,  
That's right this day.'

But the spirit of Moderatism was to be fully seen in the debate upon Missions in 1796. It was moved in the General Assembly by Robert Heron, the unfortunate friend of Burns, and deeply shocked was old Jupiter Carlyle. It wounded the feelings for the proprieties of the old man. For half a century, said he, had he sat as a member, and he was happy to think that never till now had he heard such revolutionary principles avowed on the floor of the house! Clergymen of lax life, and whose neglect of parochial duties was notorious, were unanimous in declaring that charity should begin at home. The spectre of Tom Paine rose before them. Never, they maintained, while still there remained at home one man under the influence of attack from the *Age of Reason*, should such a visionary overture be entertained. But there was worse behind this. The missionary societies were united with various corresponding centres; accordingly, in the days of the Dundas dynasty, when Burns during this very year was reminded that it was his place to act and not to think, when the Alien and Traitorous Correspondence Act of 1793 and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in 1794 had revived the worst of obsolete and feudal enactments, a wily use of this reign of terror was made to defeat missions by an attack on their supposed

insidious and political designs. The lawyer who was afterwards to sit on the bench as Lord President Boyle, rose and said: 'The people meet under the pretext of spreading Christianity among the heathen. Observe, sir, they are affiliated, they have a common object, they correspond with each other, they look for assistance from foreign countries, in the very language of many of the seditious societies. Already, it is to be marked, they have a common fund. Where is the security that the money of this fund will not, as the reverend Principal [Hill of St. Andrews] said, be used for very different purposes? And as for those Missionary Societies, I do aver that, since it is to be apprehended that their funds may be in time, nay, certainly will be, turned against the Constitution, so it is the bounden duty of this House to give the overtures recommending them our most serious disapprobation, and our immediate, most decisive opposition.' The legal mind is not often remarkable for profundity, but the fine violation of reasoning in the 'nay, certainly will be,' is just on a par with Jonathan Tawse's 'clean perversion of the constitutional law,' which we have seen before. The detection of treason, too, lurking in the apparently harmless missions fairly rivals Serjeant Buzfuz in *Pickwick*, with his exposure of the danger underlying the 'chops and tomato sauce' of the defendant. Such had been the unhappy legacy of Robertson. Such was the legal spirit infused from the bar to the bench that was to act in decisions

against the true interests of the Church during the Ten Years' Conflict.

But the tide was to turn. Years of dissatisfaction had at last produced the inevitable reaction, and in 1834 the General Assembly had bowed to the storm and passed the Veto Act. Then were discovered the evils of co-ordinate jurisdictions, the mistake committed in 1690 and 1707 by which no provision had been made for a line of clear demarcation between the ecclesiastical and civil courts, and the blunder committed in intrusting great questions affecting Scotland to the judgments of aliens in political sympathies. The tone of many a decision of the House of Lords was to make people think upon Seafield's brutal jest about 'the end of an auld sang,' and Belhaven's trumpet-warning about the risks to the 'National Church founded on a rock, secured by a claim of right, descending into a plain upon a level with Jews and Papists.' There were limits even to the loyalty of the most faithful, and for ten weary years the conflict between the courts was to run its course. In 1842 the Church had instructed its Lord High Commissioner to lay before Her Majesty a series of resolutions by which it was hoped that a rupture could be averted. On the 18th of May 1843 the Commissioner for the Crown was the Marquis of Bute, and after the levée in Holyrood Palace, the retiring Moderator, Dr. Welsh, preached in St. Giles, and in St. Andrew's Church the Assembly—the last Assembly of the real Church of Scotland—met.

The scene so often described had best be given in Miller's own words, as at once affording a capital specimen of his editorial style and as the work of an eye-witness. We abridge from his leader of May 20 :—

‘The morning levée had been marked by an incident of a somewhat extraordinary nature, and which history, though in these days little disposed to mark prodigies and omens, will scarce fail to record. The crowd in the Chamber of Presence was very great, and there was, we believe, a considerable degree of confusion and pressure in consequence. Suddenly,—whether brushed by some passer by, jostled rudely aside, or merely affected by the tremor of the floor communicated to the partitioning, a large portrait of William the Third, that had held its place in Holyrood for nearly a century and a half, dropped heavily from the walls. “There,” exclaimed a voice<sup>1</sup> from the crowd,—“there goes the Revolution Settlement.” For hours before the meeting of Assembly, the galleries of St. Andrew’s Church, with the space behind, railed off for the accommodation of office-bearers, not members, were crowded to suffocation, and a vast assemblage still continued to besiege the doors. . . . The Moderator rose and addressed the House in a few impressive sentences. There had been infringement, he said, of the constitution of the Church,—an infringement so great, that they could not constitute the Assembly without a violation of the Union between Church and State, as now authoritatively defined and declared. He was, therefore, compelled, he added, to protest against proceeding further,

<sup>1</sup> The ‘voice’ of this now famous utterance was William Howieson Crauford, Esq. of Craufurdland.

and, unfolding a document which he held in his hand, he read, in a slow and emphatic manner, the protest of the Church. For the first few seconds, the extreme anxiety to hear defeated its object,—the universal “hush, hush,” occasioned considerably more noise than it allayed; but the momentary confusion was succeeded by the most unbroken silence; and the reader went on till the impressive close of the document, when he flung it down on the table of the House and solemnly departed. He was followed at a pace’s distance by Dr. Chalmers; Dr. Gordon and Dr. Patrick M’Farlan immediately succeeded, and then the numerous sitters on the thickly occupied benches behind filed after them, in a long unbroken line, which for several minutes together continued to thread the passage to the eastern door, till at length only a blank space remained. As the well-known faces and forms of some of the ablest and most eminent men that ever adorned the Church of Scotland glided along in the current, to disappear from the courts of the State institution for ever, there rose a cheer from the galleries. At length, when the last of the withdrawing party had disappeared, there ran from bench to bench a hurried, broken whispering,—“How many? how many?”—“*four hundred*”: The scene that followed we deemed one of the most striking of the day. The empty vacated benches stretched away from the Moderator’s seat in the centre of the building, to the distant wall. There suddenly glided into the front rows a small party of men whom no one knew,—obscure, mediocre, blighted-looking men, that, contrasted with the well-known forms of our Chalmers and Gordons, Candlishes and Cunninghams, M’Farlans, Brewsters, and Dunlops, reminded one of the thin and blasted corn ears of Pharaoh’s vision, and like

them, too, seemed typical of a time of famine and destitution.'

'I am proud of my country, no other country in Europe could have done it,' said Lord Jeffrey. The Church had simply, in 1843, reverted to the precedents of 1560 and 1578, and had, in the simile of Goldsmith happily used by Miller on the occasion, returned like the hare to the spot from which it flew. Edinburgh, he maintained, had not seen such a day since the unrolling by Johnston of Warriston of the parchment in the Greyfriars'. There was a secession, not from the Church, but from the law courts, and temporary majorities of the Assembly. But the evil men do lives in brass after them, and the Act of 1712 had rent the Church of Scotland. No other country had been so fortunately situated for the exemplification of an unbroken and a National Church. It was left to two Tory Governments to ruin it, but opportunities once lost may not thereafter be recovered. Under the long reign of Moderatism it looked as if the *Nec tamen consumebatur* were indeed to be a mockery. But the revival of national feeling at the beginning of the century, and the expression of popular rights in the Reform Bill of 1832, were waves that were destined to extend from the nation to the Church. The great book of M'Crie in 1811 had truly been fruitful of results. For a century Moderatism had reigned on a lost sense of nationality. But, as for long the history of Rome had been written with a patrician bias and an uneasy remembrance of that figure of

Tiberius Gracchus, so through the influence of M'Crie the figure of John Knox had again risen to popular consciousness in Scotland. There they could see a greater than the Boyles, the Hopes, the Kinnoulls, the Broughams, and the Aberdeens. Yet, till its publication, the face of M'Crie had been almost unknown upon the streets of Edinburgh.

And the Succession? Did it abide with the Free Church or the residuary Establishment? Lord Macaulay will show, in his speech in the House of Commons on July 9, 1845, what the violation of the Treaty of Union had effected in 1712, and that 'the church of Boston and Carstares was not the church of Bryce and Muir, but the church of Chalmers and Brewster.' No one knew that better than Hugh Miller, and no one had done more to make the issues plain to the people of Scotland. To him it was 'the good cause,' as Macaulay in his address to the Edinburgh electors had styled his own. While a plank remained, or a flag flew, by that it was his wish to be found. It was the cry which M'Crie had said, 'has not ceased to be heard in Scotland for nearly three hundred years.' From his first leader in *The Witness*, of January 15, 1840, to the close of his life in 1856, he was to send forth no other sound. 'Your handwriting did my heart good,' he writes in a letter before us, of 9th October 1840, to his friend Patrick Duff in Elgin, 'and reminded me of old times long before I became ill-natured or dreamed of hurting any one. I am now "fighting in the throng"—giving

and taking many a blow. But I am taking all the care I can to strike only big wicked fellows, who lift hands against the Kirk, or oppress the poor man.'

Napoleon feared three papers more than ten thousand bayonets, and certainly Miller was a tower of strength not to be found in the adverse battalions. None of the merely 'able editors' of the Establishment party, much less the pamphleteers of the quality of Dean of Faculty Hope, could touch him or find a link in his armour. This was a tribute to character. The men of the opposition had 'nothing to draw with, and the well was deep'; and many names then blown far and wide by windy rumour, such as Dr. Cook, Robertson of Ellon, Dr. Bryce, and Principal Pirie of Aberdeen, survive like flies in amber only because it was their misfortune to be associated with great men. He might have said with Landor that he did not strive with these men, for certainly of them all 'none was worth his strife'; yet, though individually contemptible, they formed a solid phalanx of Moderatism and of dead resistance to argument and conviction. It was a time of great men. If Chalmers was the incarnation of the country and the movement, Murray Dunlop its jurist, Cunningham and Candlish its debaters, it was yet to the leaders in *The Witness* that the great mass of his countrymen looked for the opinions of Hugh Miller. His relative, Dr. Gustavus Aird of Creich, the late Moderator of the Free Church, has informed us that in his own parish he learned the paper was read out

in the mill, and that in many places the same thing took place. It is well to have the ear of the country, and it was well at the critical hour that there was a man found who was heard gladly of the common people.

## CHAPTER IV

### IN EDINBURGH—LAST YEARS

'In close fights a champion grim,  
In camps a leader sage.'

SCOTT.

'WE have had,' says Dr. Guthrie in a letter dated 6th September 1839, 'a meeting about our newspaper. Miller, I may say, is engaged, and will be here, I expect, in the course of two or three weeks. His salary is to begin with £200, and mount with the profits of the paper. I think this too little, but I have no doubt to see it double that sum in a year or two—Johnstone to be the publisher, we advancing £1000, and he will need other two. I am down with Brown, Candlish, and Cunningham for £25 each. A few individuals only have as yet been applied to, and already £600 of the £1000 has been subscribed.' His household he left behind him in Cromarty for the time, and he lodged in St. Patrick Square. Fortunate was it for the people that at the right time its ear should have been caught by such a writer, one whose voice in the arena was at once recognised by the individuality of its tone. The Edinburgh press had long been held by the Moderate party,

and the belief had been that the conflict was a mere clerical striving for power. It remained for Miller to educate the party, and to such effect was this done that, while the non-intrusion petition to Parliament in 1839 from Edinburgh had borne but five thousand signatures, the number, says Robert Chambers, mounted in the first year of *The Witness* to thirteen thousand. It was clear to all Scotland that there was a new Richmond in the field. It is the more necessary to insist on this, because the clerical mind, which after Malebranche is too prone to see everything in itself and its own surroundings, has never fully confessed the services to the country of the layman. As Guthrie points out, a silence is maintained all through Buchanan's *Ten Years' Conflict* on Miller. This he regrets, not only on the ground that it would be Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark, but also for its missing the cardinal principle that at such a time the press and public meetings form the most influential of factors. This such a kindred spirit and public orator as Guthrie is quick to see, nor does he go beyond the facts of the case, or the judgment now of the country, in maintaining that 'Miller did more than any dozen ecclesiastical leaders, and that, Chalmers excepted, he was the greatest of all the men of the Ten Years' Conflict.'

He certainly was no half advocate or mere 'able editor' in the Carlylean phrase. If Chalmers, Candlish, and Cunningham were the leaders in the ecclesiastical courts, Murray Dunlop the jurist, Miller was the pen-

man of the party. 'His business,' says Guthrie, the orator of the movement, 'was to fight. Fighting was Miller's delight. On the eve of what was to prove a desperate conflict, I have seen him in a high and happy state of eagerness and excitement. He was a scientific as well as an ardent controversialist; not bringing forward, far less throwing away, his whole force on the first assault, but keeping up the interest of the controversy, and continuing to pound and crush his opponents by fresh matter in every succeeding paper. When I used to discuss questions with him, under the impression, perhaps, that he had said all he had got to say very powerful and very pertinent to the question, nothing was more common than his remarking, in nautical phrase, "Oh, I have got some shot in the locker yet—ready for use, if it is needed"!'

And that it was needed, in his own and the Church's interest, the pamphlets of abuse by which he was attacked, and which would form a small library, would remain to show. Thus he was really, all the more from his isolated position, as we shall see, indebted to what Professor Masson, in an appreciation of him in *Macmillan's Magazine* for 1865, describes as the Goethean 'demonic element.' He had a better knowledge, he shows, of the country and its ecclesiastical history than was possessed by his clerical colleagues, and along with this went what he calls 'a tremendous element of ferocity, more of the Scandinavian than the Celt, leaving his enemy not only slain but battered, bruised and beaten out of shape.'

This, though in a sense exaggerated, is true to the extent that he entered the lists not as a mere servant, but as a convinced defender of the liberties of the people. To touch on anything that infringed upon the Presbyterian history of the country—be it by the Duke of Buccleuch, the Duke of Sutherland, or other site-refusing landlords of the day, or by some flippant alien and Episcopalian pamphleteer among the briefless of the Parliament House, was certainly to court a bout from which the unwary disputant emerged in a highly battered condition. Yet his pugnacity was really foreign to the nature of the man. His surviving daughter informs the writer he was ‘a very mild and gentle father, and his whole attitude was one depressed with humility.’ It was, however, well for site-refusers and factors riding on the top of their commission from absentee landlords to feel that attacks upon their policy in *The Witness* were not to be lightened by any hopes of an apology or by appeals to fear. ‘The watchman,’ he writes in a letter before us, dated 9th October 1840, ‘is crying half-past twelve o’clock, and I have more than half a mile to walk out of town between two rows of trees on a solitary road. Fine opportunity for cudgel-beating factors I carry, however, with me a five-shilling stick, strong enough to break heads of the ordinary thickness, and like quite as well to appeal to an antagonist’s fears as to his mercy.’

*The Witness* started with a circulation of six hundred. Its position among the Scottish papers was at once

assured, and no greater proof of the personality of the editor and the quality of 'the leaders' remains than in the curious fact that, now after half a century, to the great mass of the people his name has been not Miller, nor Mr. Miller, but Hugh Miller. As in the similar case of John Bright the people seized on the fact that here was a writer and speaker sprung from themselves, and his christian name was as familiar as his surname. Yet, curiously enough, from first to last he never believed in the profession of an editor, and from the 'new-journalism' of the paragraph and the leaderette he would have turned in disdain. Nothing but the fact that he felt convinced of his mission would have induced him to leave Cromarty for the post. 'I have been,' he could truly say, 'an honest journalist. I have never once given expression to an opinion which I did not conscientiously regard as sound, nor stated a fact which, at the time at least, I did not believe to be true.' He never mastered, or felt it necessary to master, the routine details of the business, for the paper was read not for its Parliamentary reports, or the exposition of party politics, but for the essays, sketches, or leaders which were known to be by him. Accordingly the mere fluent production of 'copy,' and the diurnal serving up of the editorial thunder by which the members of the fourth estate fondly delude themselves that they lead public opinion, never really came naturally to him. He prepared himself carefully for his work; and perhaps the bi-weekly issue of the paper and its peculiar

nature lessened the strain upon the editor. His successor in the editorial chair of the paper, Dr. Peter Bayne, in the preface to Miller's *Essays* (1862) says :

‘He meditated his articles as an author meditates his books or a poet his verses, conceiving them as wholes, working fully out their trains of thought, enriching them with far brought treasures of fact, and adorning them with finished and apposite illustration. In the quality of *completeness* those articles stand, so far as I know, alone in the records of journalism. For rough and hurrying vigour they might be matched, or more, from the columns of the *Times* ; in lightness of wit and smart lucidity of statement they might be surpassed by the happiest performances of French journalists—a Prévost-Paradol, or a St. Marc Girardin ; and for occasional brilliancies of imagination, and sudden gleams of piercing thought neither they nor any other newspaper articles, have, I think, been comparable with those of S. T. Coleridge. But as complete journalistic essays, symmetrical in plan, finished in execution, and of sustained and splendid ability, the articles of Hugh Miller are unrivalled.’

Certainly few modern editors could produce such a leader as he did on Dugald Stewart (Aug. 26, 1854), or upon the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (April 30, 1842), or could, finding themselves for a day in London, ‘when time hung heavy on my hands,’ buy a cheap reprint of Eugene Sue’s *Wandering Jew* and convert its hurried perusal into a capital paper on the conflict between Continental Ultramontanism and Liberalism. The individuality of the writer and the tenacity with which he held

to his opinions gave the journal a tone naturally impossible to an ordinary party paper. The great mass of the readers of *The Witness* were of course Liberals, yet he strenuously contended against making it an organ of any political party. Part of the prospectus ran—‘*The Witness* will not espouse the cause of any of the political parties which now agitate and divide the country. Public measures, however, will be weighed as they present themselves, in an impartial spirit, and with care proportioned to their importance.’ He had noticed, he said, the Church of Scotland for a time converted by Conservatism into a mine against the Whigs, and he was determined that no ‘tool-making politician’ should again convert it to a party weapon. It was to remain the organ of ‘the Free Church people against Whig, Tory, Radical, and Chartist.’ So careful was he of the good name of the paper that he ‘often retained communications beside him for weeks and months, until some circumstance occurred that enabled him to determine regarding their real value.’ Chalmers read the paper to the last with approval, and this was a source of joy and support to Miller. Nothing but such a wise supervision could have piloted *The Witness* through the abuse and the inventions of the Tory organs. When the *Edinburgh Advertiser*, of June 13, 1848, could try to improve on that rhetorical flight of Barrère, characteristically fathered by its author on ‘an ancient author,’ about the tree of liberty being watered by the blood of tyrants, by an assertion that *The Witness* had

'menaced our nobles with the horrors of the French Revolution, when the guillotine plied its nightly task, and the bloody hearts of aristocrats dangled in buttonholes on the streets of Paris!'—proof was naturally wanting. A phantom of a 'grey discrowned head sounding hollow on the scaffold at Whitehall' was also served up by that paper, in its devotion to the house of Buccleuch, as a threat in which the irate scribe professed to detect a subtle attack on the House of Hanover in the interests of the Free Church. 'I am a Whig, in politics,' he said, 'never a Radical or Conservative.' He had no cheap sympathy with the working men, for them he had seen on their worst side. 'Three-fourths of the distress of the country's mechanics (of course not reckoning that of the unhappy class who have to compete with machinery) and nine-tenths of their vagabondism will be found restricted to inferior workmen, who like Hogarth's "Careless Apprentice," neglected the opportunity of their second term of education. The sagacious painter had a truer insight into this matter than most of our modern educationists.' He was no believer in household, much less in universal, suffrage, and as an admirer of Delolme's views on our constitution, the radical he regarded as a 'political quack,' convinced as he was that 'those who think must govern those that toil.' But he advocated, along with Guthrie, a system of undenominational education of a kind pretty much what is now established, a moderate extension of the franchise, abolition of entail, and the



game laws. The Maynooth grant and Macaulay he opposed. He was an Oliverian for Ireland, and the cause of much trouble in the most distressful country he viewed as associated with that subsidy, which he would have preferred to see converted into a grant for science.

Indeed, like most of his countrymen he had a strong view of historical, as distinguished from mere party, conservatism. The last has of course been rendered simply impossible in Scotland by the history and the ecclesiastical tenets of the country, but he ever carried about him something like the conviction of Dr. Livingstone, that the common people of Scotland had read history and were no levellers. Thus he held, like Burke, to what Mr. Morley calls 'the same energetic feeling about moral laws, the same frame of counsel and prudence, the same love for the slowness of time, the same slight account held of mere intellectual knowledge.' This historic conservatism of Burke would be taken by most Scotchmen as a pretty good basis for reasoned Liberalism, and the fixity of Miller's main positions only exposed him the more to the wearisome Tory vocabulary of 'high-flyer, fire-raiser, fanatic,' etc. Admirably in the *Letter to Brougham* does he seize on the ground of the political Liberalism of Scotland :—

' I, my Lord, am an integral part of the Church of Scotland, and of such integral parts, and of nothing else, is the body of this Church composed ; nor do we look to the

high places of the earth when we address ourselves to its adorable Head. The Earl of Kinnoul is not the Church, nor any of the other patrons in Scotland. Why, then, are these men suffered to exercise, and that so exclusively, one of the Church's most sacred privileges? You tell us of "existing institutions, vested rights, positive interests." Do we not know that the slave-holders, who have so long and so stubbornly withstood your Lordship's truly noble appeals in behalf of the African bondsman, have been employing an exactly similar language for the last fifty years; and that the onward progress of man to the high place which God has willed him to occupy has been impeded at every step by existing institutions, vested rights, positive interests?'

Bitter words, surely, all this for the ecclesiastical wire-pullers of 1874, and inheritors of the policy of the Hopes and Muirs, when in approaching the Government with a statement of the intolerable strain of patronage, they tabled that same *Letter to Brougham*!

To the last, Miller clung to 'the Established principle.' This need not seem wonderful. The Free Church he regarded as the Church of Scotland in all but the state tie, the more so that the coercion by the civil courts had not failed to impress him with the conviction that the Headship, as stipulated for the Scottish Establishment by the Treaty of Union, though defeated by Bolingbroke and lost in the stagnation of the eighteenth century, had passed as an integral part of her constitution to the Free Church. The difficulty attaching to his position proved an unfortunate source of tension between him and some of the leaders, and to this

was due that lamentable quarrel with Dr. Candlish which he carried to his grave, and which perhaps broke his heart, for he was what Lord Cockburn had called their mutual friend Murray Dunlop, 'the purest of all enthusiasts' and though Miller triumphed absolutely, yet it was not in human nature to forget that the attack was, however sincere, an attack upon cherished convictions.

There can be, therefore, no good now in minimising the fact that Dr. Candlish, in his zeal to secure a political and tempting opportunity against the Tory party, was led to enter on a quarrel with Miller. The action really amounted to a motion of no confidence in his editorial management. He proposed to centralise the Church press, and to secure the intrusion of a sub-editor on the existing staff, and the conversion of the paper into an explicit and active party organ. But by this time Miller had become one of the proprietors, by undertaking to pay back by instalments the thousand pounds advanced by Johnstone to the subscribers, with the interest, year by year, of the unpaid portion till the whole debt should be extinguished. The most objectionable feature was the proposal to secure the services of some smart Parliament House 'able editor.' *The Witness* had been accused of 'preferring Protestantism to Macaulay, and damaging the elections.' In this was shown the cloven foot, for it was an attempt to run the paper for the Whigs, and to render it the organ of the legal lights of the Parlia-

ment House in pursuit of official posts and spoil, of which Miller justly thought they had enough. Besides, the fall of a Government would mean the fall of that Government paper, and thus its influence as the organ of Free Churchmen would be damaged. Already the paper had parted with one of its best men who had been attracted to *The Times*, and in the whole scheme Miller saw 'a censorship; and the censor, assisted by the nice taste and tact of the Parliament House editor, is to be Dr. Candlish.' But, he asks, 'who was to control Dr. Candlish?' He could not see the paper jockeyed for a Government, and he stood aloof from 'Exhalations blown aslant, over the faces of even the Evangelical Churches, from the bogs and fens of a hollow Liberalism that professes to respect all religions, and believes none.' He felt that he had the people behind him, and 'possessing their confidence, I do not now feel justified in retiring from my post: Dr. Candlish and his Parliament House friends are not the ministers and people of the Free Church of Scotland—"of wiles, more inexpert, I boast not,"—the difference must either close entirely, or the people of Scotland must be made fully acquainted with the grounds on which it rests.' The unfortunate rupture closed by the very pointed question by Chalmers, 'Which of you could direct Hugh Miller?'

Meanwhile, in the Highlands and Islands, things were for a time going hard with the now disestablished Church. In some cases they had to preach 'where the

snow was falling so heavily upon the people, that when it was over they could scarcely distinguish the congregation from the ground, except by their faces.' Baird of Cockburnspath had passed away in a room, 'a few inches above which were the slates of the roof, without any covering, and as white with hoar frost within as they were white with snow without. His very breath on the blankets was frozen as hard as the ice outside.' At Canonbie, Guthrie had passed Johnny Armstrong's Tower, and preached in wind and rain to a large congregation, 'old men, apparently near the grave, all wet and benumbed with the keen wind and cold rain.' In Cromarty, Miller's old friend Stewart was now preaching in the factory close, and there, in the summer of 1843, after a night of rain had swept the streets, his mind reverts to the congregations over Scotland in the open air—'I do begrudge the Moderates our snug, comfortable churches. I begrudge them my father's pew. It bears date 1741, and has been held by the family, through times of poverty and depression, a sort of memorial of better days, when we could afford getting a pew in the front gallery. But yonder it lies, empty within an empty church, a place for spiders to spin undisturbed, while all who should be occupying it take their places on stools and forms in the factory close.' The subtle mark of Scottish *gentility* in the allusion to the pew will not fail to strike the reader. Let it not be said that it savours of 'gigmanity'—in that standing bugbear of Carlyle!

In 1844 he set out on a geological ramble round the Hebrides in the floating manse, '*The Betsey*,' by which the Church served the islands in the west, owing to the refusal of sites by Lord Macdonald and others. The yacht was but thirty feet by eleven, and there with his old Cromarty friend Swanson, the 'outed' minister of the Small Isles, he learned the hardships to which the miserable policy of the landlords had exposed the poor Highlanders. But if 'the earth was the *lairds*' and the fulness thereof,' the water was not ! The building in which the congregation met was of turf—'the minister encased in his ample-skirted storm-jacket of oiled canvas, and protected atop by a genuine sou'wester, of which the broad posterior rim sloped half a yard down his back ; and I, closely wrapped up in my grey maud, which proved, however, a rather indifferent protection, against the penetrating powers of a Hebridean drizzle.' In none of his works does he exhibit a happier descriptive view than in *The Cruise of the Betsey*, though in popularity it has been surpassed by his *First Impressions of England*, where he records the results of an eight weeks' tour, in 1845, from Newcastle to London, passing York, Birmingham, and Stratford on the way. In 1847 he published his *Foot-prints of the Creator*, in reply to the *Vestiges* by Robert Chambers, in which he seeks to controvert the theory of development, at least in the form in which it was then presented, by attempting to prove the fishes and the fossils of the Old Red to be as advanced in character

as those now existing. A racy sketch on *The Geology of the Bass* formed part of a contribution to a work then issued, dealing with the history, botany, and zoology of the Bass Rock. The copyright of this he reserved with a view to its subsequent incorporation into a long-projected geological survey of Scotland. But this cherished idea he never lived to accomplish, though such a work from his hand would have been well-nigh final and perfect in its descriptive graces.

He was still in the enjoyment of his great physical power in spite of the severe strain to which his editorial and literary labours exposed him, added to as these were by his appearances in London and elsewhere as a public lecturer. As an exponent of science he could attract an audience in Exeter Hall of five thousand persons, whose attention he held to the close in spite of his northern accent; though perhaps this, like the Fifeshire speech of Chalmers and the Annandale tongue of Carlyle, may have given an extra charm to the individuality of the lecturer. The quarrel with Candlish had thinned the ranks of some of his friends, nor did he ever draw to the circle of Edinburgh as he had done to those in Cromarty. He was not to be easily got at by the eminent men who sought his acquaintance, yet it is with pleasure we catch occasional glimpses of him in the society of the best that either Edinburgh or London could produce. Stewart in Cromarty had passed away, in 1847, during the prosecution to him of a call to St. George's to succeed

Candlish, who had been translated to the college chair left vacant by Chalmers. None of his friends were nearer to him than Mackgill-Crichton of Rankeillour in Fife, and there we find him one Christmas along with Sir David Brewster and Guthrie. Both Miller and his host were men of great physical powers, and—as Professor Masson notes—the geologist had a habit of estimating men by their physique. Crichton had narrated how he had started by the side of the mail coach as it passed his gates, and after a run of twenty miles he had been the first at the ferry. ‘A horse could do more than either of you,’ was the amused rejoinder of Brewster.

The issue of his *Schools and Schoolmasters* (1854), republished from the columns of his paper, brought him warm encomiums from Carlyle, Robert Chambers, and others. Miller in politics and other points differed strongly from Chambers, and of course at this time the secret of the authorship of the *Vestiges* had not been divulged. Yet beautifully does Chambers, to whom Scottish publishing and periodical literature owes so much, refer to the early days in Cromarty in comparison with his own struggles in Peebles. Readers who may have not quite forgiven some passages in Chambers’s *History of the Rebellion of 1745* will doubtless soften their asperity after reading Chambers’s account of his struggling through a whole set of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* which he had in a lumber garret,—setting out at sixteen, ‘as a bookseller with only my own small collection of

books as a stock—not worth more than two pounds, I believe, quickly independent of all aid—not all a gain, for I am now sensible that my spirit of self-reliance too often manifested itself in an unsocial, unamiable light, while my recollections of “honest poverty” may have made me too eager to attain and secure worldly prosperity. Had I possessed uncles such as yours, I might have been much the better of it through life.’

The close was cheered by the thought that he had fairly earned the admiration and confidence of his country. Yet nothing that could in any way fetter his editorial independence or freedom of action could he permit. When the money invested in *The Witness* was offered to him by Chalmers it was firmly declined, and the proposal to requite his services to the country by providing him with a residence he would not allow. ‘I know,’ he said, ‘that as the defender of Free Church principles my intentions have been pure and loyal, but I am not quite sure I have been successful in doing the right thing, nor have I done anything that is worthy of such consideration from my friends. I believe my way is to make yet.’ The same was his answer to a proposal to allow his name to stand for election as Lord Rector of Marischal College in Aberdeen; he met it pretty much in the vein of Carlyle at Edinburgh, when he felt that here was a generation in young Scotland rising up who seemed to say that he had not altogether, after a hard-spent day, been an unprofitable

servant. Time had softened the ecclesiastical asperities of other years, and in 1853 Lord Dalhousie wrote to Lord Aberdeen to secure his election for the vacant Chair of Natural History in Edinburgh. But it fell to Edward Forbes. Again he was singled out by Lord Breadalbane, in 1855, and he was offered the post of Distributor of Stamps for Perthshire, an office which would to him have been a comfortable sinecure, securing alike competence and much leisure. For twenty-eight years Wordsworth in Westmoreland filled such a post, and Miller's banking experiences would have fitted him perfectly for it. But he felt that a man turned fifty could not take up a new vocation with success. That in this he was too modest there can be no doubt; but after a brief consideration he made up his mind to decline. 'I find,' he said, 'my memory not now so good as it was formerly. I forget things which I was wont to remember with ease. I am not clear, in such circumstances, about taking upon me any money responsibility.'

In fact, the long and severe strain of sixteen years had told. Of the extraordinary memory whose failure he regrets, Guthrie supplies a forcible example. In the shop of Johnstone the publisher a discussion turned on some debate in the Town Council, when Miller said it reminded him of a scene in Galt's *Provost*. He repeated the passage, halting at the speech of the convener of the trades, but was evidently vexed at the temporary breakdown. He got a copy from the front shop, and turned

up the passage. Then they learned that, though it was fifteen years since last he had seen the book, he had repeated page after page *verbatim*.

The year 1856 was one remarkable for garotte robberies. This awakened in the overtaxed brain of Miller a fear for his museum of geological specimens which he had housed for himself at Shrub Mount, Portobello. The last four years of his life he had spent there, and often he would leave the house and return late in the evening after hours of investigation of the coast line and geological features of Leith and the surrounding country. He knew his Edinburgh thoroughly; some of his happiest papers are to be read in his *Edinburgh and its Neighbourhood*; and it was after one of these excursions that Sir Archibald Geikie had seen him, as he describes in the reminiscence to be found in the last pages of this work. The fear of burglars had taken hold firmly of his imagination, and he resumed the habit of bearing fire-arms which he had begun at Cromarty when carrying the money of the bank between that town and Tain. The inflammation of the lungs in his early days as a mason had again at intervals returned, and his sleep was broken by dreams of such a harassing nature that he would wake in the morning to examine his clothes, in the belief that he was now the victim of evil spirits. In such a condition it was not unnatural that his mind should take a colour from other days, where the reader may remember his own account of seeing the figure at the door after his

father's death. Professor Masson, we see, notes this point, and he believes that Miller felt a strange fascination for all stories of second-sight. Though he never wrote or spoke of such, except in the sober tone of science, yet 'my impression,' he says, 'is that Hugh Miller did all his life carry about him, as Scott did, but to a greater extent, a belief in ghostly agencies of the air, earth, and water, always operating, and sometimes revealing themselves. One sees his imagination clinging to what his reason would fain reject.' The only hope lay in a total cessation from all work, but this was found impossible through the almost second nature which over-exertion had become to him. He had also a rooted dislike for all medicines, and it was with difficulty that he was induced to put himself under the management of Dr. Balfour and Professor Miller. The last day of his life was given to the revision of the proof-sheets of his *Testimony of the Rocks*, and in the evening he turned over the pages of Cowper, whose works had ever been among his standard favourites. By a curious fatality his eye rested on *The Castaway*, written by the poet in a similar mental condition, and which for sustained force and limpid expression is unrivalled as a religious lyric. He retired to rest on the night of the 24th December 1856. Next morning, his body, half-dressed, was found with a bullet from a revolver through his left lung. He had lifted a heavy woven jersey over his chest before he fired, which showed that death had not been accidental. On a table a loose sheet of paper

was found on which had been written these lines to his wife:—

‘DEAREST LYDIA,—My brain burns, I *must* have walked ; and a fearful dream rises upon me. I cannot bear the horrible thought. God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me. Dearest Lydia, dear children, farewell. My brain burns as the recollection grows. My dear, dear wife, farewell. HUGH MILLER.’

It fell to Dr. Guthrie, in whose church of Free St. John’s the deceased had been an office member, to apprise the widow of the real nature of the case ; and in order to secure her sanction for a *post-mortem* examination the above letter had to be produced, showing that his purpose had been executed almost before the ink was dry. On the 26th the verdict was issued:—‘From the diseased appearances found in the brain, taken in connection with the history of the case, we have no doubt that the act was suicidal, under the impulse of insanity.’ His funeral was the largest Edinburgh had seen since that of Chalmers, and by his side in the Grange Cemetery he was laid. To the mass of his countrymen abroad he was the greatest of living Scotchmen. His works had given him a European reputation in science, while to those at home the work he had accomplished as a tribune of the people had given him a position second only to that of Guthrie.

A generation has arisen since which hears but by vague report the principles for which the men of 1843 contended. It takes many a man to fall in the ditch

before glorious revolutions can successfully march over in their pumps and silk stockings, giving their victorious three-times-three. It has been sought to minimise these issues, to explain them away after the manner of 'able editors' and complacent philosophers cheerfully 'at ease in Zion,' and to maintain, with the hardy gravity of ignorance, that the combatants really knew not what they fought for—the Headship of Christ, Anti-Patronage, or resistance to the civil courts. Similar futilities we have seen ventilated over the American Civil War. The North, say the philosophic thinkers, or tinkers, did not know whether it fought for the preservation of the Union or against slavery. Such speculations are too thin to carry much weight. In both cases many went to their grave for what they believed to be principle, and all such men may be safely trusted to have reached some conclusions and clear issues. These issues obviously all met; after Auchterarder on the one hand, and South Carolina on the other, had led the way, no such easy subterfuge was possible for either party.

The lesson then learned at such a cost might never have been necessary, with a better adjustment of the political balance, which has been again found wanting and craves a final and a rational settlement. What Fairfoul in 1662 told Middleton had been simply again repeated in 1843 by Muir and Hope, who held the ear of Sir James Graham, to whom Peel had resigned the whole management of Scottish affairs. For all that

Graham knew of them, Peel might as well have left them to a foreigner. It took the death of thousands of Irishmen in the potato famine of 1847 to convince the overfed John Bull of even the barest existence of an Irish Question, and many a man went to his grave before Lord Aberdeen, Peel, Graham, and other official people could learn for themselves the true condition of Scotland. Then it was too late, and their regrets were vain. The bill of Bolingbroke brought in, as Burnet said, to weaken the Scottish Church, had produced its logical effects in widening the gulf between the people and the nobility of Scotland; education at Eton, Harrow, and the English Universities had done the rest. Carlyle is known to have regarded the action of the Church in 1843 as the greatest thing in his time; the sole survivor of the Peel ministry, Mr. Gladstone, has expressed the same opinion; while the critical, wiry, and alert little Jeffrey was 'proud of his country.' It bears to-day the mark very strongly of Hugh Miller. Nor need the workman be ashamed of his work—from which, therefore, let him not be separated.

## CHAPTER V

### IN SCIENCE

‘ In league with the stones of the field.’—JOB v. 23.

THE geologist writes in sand literally and historically, and in the science of the Testimony of the Rocks supersession is the law. ‘Such,’ says Miller himself in the preface to the first edition of the *Old Red Sandstone*, ‘is the state of progression in geological science that the geologist who stands still but for a very little must be content to find himself left behind.’ The advancing tide of knowledge leaves the names of the early pioneers little more than a list of extinct volcanoes. Hooke and Burnet, Ray and Woodward, Moro and Michel, are to the ordinary mass of readers about as obsolete as the saurian and the mastodon. Only the very few can live in a tide so strong, which bears away not only the older landmarks but even such names as Werner and Hutton, Hall and Fleming.

From about 1830 to 1850 the old metaphysical reign seems to have ceased ; and Jeffrey, in the palmy days of the *Edinburgh Review*, could declare that the interest in psychology had well-nigh passed away with Dugald

Stewart. Natural Science seemed to be taking its place, and the British Association movement lent impetus to the new *régime*. Sedgwick, Buckland, Murchison, Owen, and others, followed by Huxley and Tyndall, appeared to herald the advent of an age when the most difficult problems could be read off the book of Nature, and the public turned eagerly from the Babel of the philosophers to the men of the new school in a sort of expectation of a royal road to learning, without missing their way in theological jungle or 'skirting the howling wastes' of metaphysics. Needless to say, the hopes were no more realised than were the expectations of a golden age of material prosperity in the wake of the Reform Bill. The problem of man and his destiny remains as rooted as ever, and the metaphysician has not been dislodged. The old battle of the evidences had been fought in the domain of mental science, and when transferred to the natural sciences the fight was not productive of the expected results. The times, as Richter said, were indeed 'a criticising critical time, hovering between the wish and the ability to believe, a chaos of conflicting times: but even a chaotic world must have its centre, and revolve round that centre: there *is* no pure entire confusion, but all such presupposes its opposite, before it can begin.' In Scotland and in England the great ecclesiastical currents of the Disruption and the Oxford Movement had left the nation for a time weary of theology, and the school of natural science was in

possession of the field. Now the tide has turned, and the geologist is threatened with eclipse. Of the *doyen* of the new school, Richard Owen, Professor Huxley says:—‘Hardly any of those speculations and determinations have stood the test of investigation. I am not sure that any one but the historian of anatomical science is ever likely to recur to them. Obvious as are the merits of Owen’s anatomical and palæontological work to every expert, it is necessary to be an expert to discuss them ; and countless pages of analysis of his memoirs would not have made the general reader any wiser than he was at first.’ Even Buckland is regarded by Boyd Dawkins as belonging to a type of extinct men. Thus is the deposition effected of the scientific Pope of the day. If such rapid supersession be the law, who can expect in departing to leave footprints in the annals of so shifting a science ? Who can be a fixed star ?

There is some comfort in the reflection that, as in Political Economy, so in Geology, it is the inspiration that lives and not the mere amount of positive contribution to knowledge. Bacon has effected nothing for science ; in everything that he attempted it may be shown that he was wrong and that his methods have led to nothing. His name is associated with no new discovery, no new law, not even with a new or inductive method. But his niche is secure through the spirit in which he approached the question ; if he did not see the Promised Land, at least he was a firm believer in its existence, and that spirit has outlived his unhappy

detraction of greater men than himself in mental philosophy. His mind was swift to perceive analogies, and such a type of mind, if it adds little to actual knowledge, is at least valuable as a stimulus. Carlyle in his political pamphlets has certainly not advanced the lines of the 'dismal science'; he even contemptuously doubted its existence, and he has done harm to it through the ready-reckoner school of *à priori* economists who refer everything with confidence to their own internal consciousness. Yet Carlyle at his worst has his value. He has the merit of showing that the problem is in its very nature an everlasting one, and that the plummet line of the mere profit-and-loss moralist will never sound the depths of man and his destiny. Such thinkers are, however, rare; but in natural science they are the salt. Such are Oken, Cuvier, Darwin; their position is independent of the truth of their theories, and they have the gift of a fused and informing imagination, by which their theories are landmarks. Much of their work has already been recast, and some of their once supposed safest generalisations have been abandoned. But the progress of science revolves round them as central suns. Hardly one of Niebuhr's interpretations of Roman history has stood the test of subsequent investigations, any more than those of Ewald in the field of Biblical criticism. Yet in historical science no two men have a more assured rank.

It is this informing power that keeps alive the geologist. Hume owes his position in metaphysics to this

power, and to his great gifts as a stylist. Few men of science have had graces of style. In Darwin it is lacking, and he has himself set on record that literature and art had ceased for him to exert any influence, and that a mere novel had become the highest form of intellectual amusement. Hutton needed a Playfair to make him intelligible, as Dugald Stewart was needed for the exposition of Reid. But it is this power that will keep Miller alive. His views upon the Old Red Sandstone, on the Noachian Deluge, on the Mosaic Cosmogony, may be right or wrong. But they have the sure merit of abiding literature, and men highly endowed with this gift have a lasting and assured fame. Mr. Lowell has declared Clough to be the true poet of the restlessness of the later half of the century, and Tennyson to be but its pale reflex. But the answer is ready and invincible: Tennyson is read, and Clough is already on the shelf. As a piece of imaginative writing, *The Old Red Sandstone* is not likely to be soon surpassed in its own line. 'I would give,' we find Buckland declaring; 'my left hand to possess such powers of description as this man has.' 'There is,' says Carlyle, 'right genial fire, everywhere nobly tempered down with peaceful radical heat, which is very beautiful to see. Luminous, memorable; all wholesome, strong, fresh, and breezy, like the "Old Red Sandstone" mountains in a sunny summer day.' We doubt if a single page of Sedgwick, or of Buckland even in his *Bridgewater Treatise*, be read—at least as literature. But a man,

whose book upon the 'Old Red' has seen its twentieth edition, whose *Testimony of the Rocks* is in its forty-second thousand, and whose *Footprints* has seen a seventeenth edition, has only attained this popularity by his solid merits as a writer and thinker. Mere popularisation cannot explain it. When a man has fully mastered his subject, and his subject has mastered him, there is sure to emerge a certain demonic force in literature or in science, all the more if the writer be a man with a style.

It need hardly be said that geology, from its very first appearance, had been associated with distinct views in Biblical criticism. The old chronology of Archbishop Ussher in the margin of the Authorised Version, by which B.C. 4004 was gravely assigned as the date of the Creation of the world, and B.C. 2348 for the Deluge, was in conflict with a science which required ages for its operations and not the limited confines of six thousand years, which form but a mere geological yesterday to the scientist like Lyell, who postulates some eighty millions of years for the formation of the coal-beds of Nova Scotia. The six 'days' of the Biblical Creation were thought unworthy, as a mere huddling of events into a point of time, of the Divine Wisdom, and impossible in conception. Mistakes in positive statement, no less than of implication, were also alleged against the Mosaic record, which was said to be admirable as literature if not immaculate in science. For long geology was regarded as a hostile

intruder, and it required much time to assuage the fears on the one hand and lessen the rather vague pretensions on the other, before the lines of demarcation could be firmly drawn, if indeed, in a certain class of both theological and scientific minds, they can be said to be even yet settled. There is still the Voltairian type of thinker which is not yet exploded; and which, even in the case of Professor Huxley, has imagined that a mere shaking of the letter of a text or two is tantamount to an annihilation of the Christian faith. 'That the sacred books,' as Carlyle says, 'could be all else than a Bank of Faith Bill, for such and such quantities of enjoyment, payable at sight in the other world, value received; which Bill becomes a waste paper, the stamp being questioned; that the Christian Religion could have any deeper foundations than books, nothing of this seems to have even in the faintest matter occurred to Voltaire. Yet herein, as we believe the whole world has now begun to discover, lies the real essence of the question.' Science, in fact, after a long *régime* of even more than Macaulayesque cocksureness, is now abating its tone. It now no longer threatens like a second flood to cover the earth, and it is possible for mental and historical science to reappear like the earth out of the waters, and a clear line to be drawn between the limits of mind and matter. Happily, accordingly, it is no longer possible for a Voltaire to meet the theologian with a belief that the shells found on high hills were dropped by pilgrims and palmers from the Holy Land,

any more than it would be possible to assert, with Dugald Stewart, that the words in Sanskrit akin to Greek were dropped by the troops of Alexander the Great. It is now as impossible to maintain, with the mythologists of legend, that the Ross-shire hills were formed by the *Cailliach-more*, or great woman, who dropped stones through the bottom of the panniers on her back, as it would be for any reactionary Chauteaubriand to assert that God made the world, at the beginning, precisely as we see it with all its completeness and antiquity, since he believed an infancy of the world would be a world without romance!—denying creation in periods, and asserting it in instantaneous processes, by which the fossils were even created just as we see them. Such a conception is not to exalt the Divine Power; or, if it appears to do so, it yet effectively annihilates a belief in the Divine Wisdom that could create pretty toys and useless fossils—a creation of mummies and skeletons that were never from the very beginning intended to be anything but skeletons, without any relation to living beings.

Miller accordingly makes it perfectly plain in what spirit he approaches the sacred record. The Bible, he says repeatedly, is neither a scientific text-book nor even a primer. Why, he asks, should it be regarded as necessary to promulgate the truths of geology when those of astronomy have been withheld? ‘Man has everywhere believed in a book which should be inspired and should teach him what God is and what God

demands of him, and this expectation is fully met in the Bible. But nowhere has man looked for the divine revelation of scientific truth, for it is in accordance with the economy of Providence, that Providence which is exhibited in gradual developments, that no such expectation has been or need be realised, the *Principia* of Newton and the discoveries of James Watt being both the result of the natural and unaided faculties of man.' Nay, more; there never could have been such a revelation given, for never yet has a single scientific truth been revealed. But, on the other hand, when he contrasts this clear perception of the demarcation of religion and science in the Bible, and the all too copious neglect of it in the other sacred books of the world, he is constrained to regard this very ability of distinction between two classes of truth as a strong argument for its inspiration.

On Man and his destiny he is no less clear, and he has many fertile suggestions to offer. His main thesis in this connection we have already seen as determining in his own life its central point. Man he regards as literally the fellow-worker with God. Up till his appearance upon the earth, nature had been remarkable only for what it was, but not for what it became. The advent of man marks the improver of creation—God made manifest in the flesh. Between his intellect and that of his Creator there is a relation, since we find creature and Creator working by the same methods. Precisely as we see China arriving at the invention of

printing, gunpowder, and the mariner's compass without any connection with the West, so we see the works of the Creator in the palæozoic period repeated by the tiny creature-worker, without any idea that he had been anticipated. Thus Creation is not merely a scheme adapted to the nature of man, but one specially adapted to the pattern nature of God. Man made in the image of God is a real and fitting preparation for God's subsequent assumption of the form of man. 'Stock and graft had the necessary affinity,' and were finally united in the one person. History is, therefore, no mere finite record dating from a human act in Eden, but is the real result of a decree, 'in which that act was written as a portion of the general programme.'

The problem of the origin of evil is of course a difficulty viewed in relation to the decrees of God, in whom no evil can exist. In the present state of things he regards evil as due to man himself. The deputed head of creation has voluntarily and of his own free will *not* chosen to be a fellow-worker with God, who, while binding him fast in the chain of events, has yet left his will free. To ordain sin would be a self-contradiction of the idea of God; He but creates the being that in turn creates sin. 'Fore-knowledge,' as Milton says, 'had no influence on their fault, which had no less proved certain unforeseen.' Perhaps this is as near as we are ever likely to get. But the Fall in its theological aspect, while it must be fully apprehended by faith, has nothing to fear from science, which teaches, if it can

be said emphatically to teach one thing, that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. With Coleridge, therefore, he regards the Fall as a necessary stage in the history of thought and of man. The creation of the non-absolute gives a pivot without which all subsequent events would be inexplicable. It gives the true means of colligating the phenomena: Man, if at the Fall he lost Eden, gained a conscience and a moral sense.

More remarkable is his attempted reconciliation of science and the Mosaic cosmogony. Chalmers had regarded the Biblical account as relating only to existing creations, and believed in the existence of a chaotic period of death and darkness between this present world and the prior geological ages. Pye Smith, on the other hand, had regarded chaos as both temporary and limited in extent, and believed that outside this area there had existed lands and seas basking in light and occupied by animals. But subsequent geological knowledge had shown that this theory of cataclysms and breaks was without evidence—many of the present plants and animals co-existing with those of the former periods; nor could Smith's theory of light existing round the coasts of the earth be brought to square with the distinct statement of the primal creation of light in Genesis. On the other hand, Miller notices that geology, as dealing not with the nature of things, but only with their actual manifestations, has to do with but three of the six days or periods. The scale of all

geologists is divided into three great classes. Lesser divisions of systems, deposits, beds, and strata may exist; but the master divisions, as he calls them, are simply those three which even the unpractised eye can detect—the Palæozoic, the Secondary, and the Tertiary. The first is the period of extraordinary fauna and flora—the period emphatically of forests and huge pines, ‘the herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing fruit.’ The second is the age of monsters, reptiles, pterodactyls and ichthyosaurs, ‘the fowl that flieth above the earth, the great sea-monsters and winged fowl after its kind.’ The Tertiary period is that of ‘the beasts of the earth and the cattle after their kind.’ In each age, it is true, there is a twilight period, a period of morning-dawn and evening-decline; but in the middle of each period it is that we find the great outstanding features above. Thus there would be no contradictions in the record. This, it must be allowed, summarises truly enough the process of creation; but it leaves out of sight the invertebrata and early fishes of the first period, and regards the succeeding carboniferous era as the leading features, while perhaps in some subordinate details it inverts the order of other appearances.

To the wider objection to the Biblical record, with its light before the creation of the sun upon the fourth day, the vegetation on the third independent of the sun’s warming rays, and to other real or supposed contradictions, Miller has a highly ingenious reply. We do not

think it fully meets the necessities of the case, but it has unquestionably the merit of imaginative power, and is in full harmony with the nature of man's mind, and is therefore preferable to any theory which would assert the exact science of the Mosaic record by its anticipation of the theory of Laplace and Herschel, by which the earth existed before the sun was given as a luminary, and was independent of the sun for light. Perhaps the theory of progressive revelation will commend itself to most as the truest and the simplest explanation, though it should be noted that the extraordinary approximation of the Biblical version to the latest science does really set it far above the merely human speculation of some old Hebrew Newton or Descartes.

While regarding the 'days' as ages, Miller views the record as the result of an *optical vision* presented to the writer. He truly enough remarks that any exact revelation would have defeated its own object through an elaborate statement to man at an early stage. Man would not have believed it, as it would have contradicted his own experience. He would no more have believed that the earth revolved on its own axis than that molluscs had preceded him on the earth. The record, therefore, he regards as according to appearance rather than to physical realities: 'The sun, moon, and stars may have been created long before, though it was not until the fourth day of creation that they became visible from the earth's surface.' The six days or periods he takes to correspond with the six divisions in

a successive series of the Azoic, Silurian, Carboniferous, Permian, Oolitic, and Tertiary ages. To the human eye of the seer, the second day would afford nothing to divert it from the atmospheric phenomena; on the fourth the celestial phenomena would alone be so prominent as to call for specific mention. But, familiar to most readers as the famous passage is, we here present it as the best example of his descriptive and imaginative powers. If there are to be reconciliations at all, as either necessary or desirable, it would be hard to beat this fine piece of fused strength and imagination.<sup>1</sup>

‘Such a description of the creative vision of Moses as the one given by Milton of that vision of the future which he represents as conjured up before Adam by the archangel, would be a task rather for the scientific poet than for the mere practical geologist or sober theologian. Let us suppose that it took place far from man, in an untrodden recess of the Midian desert, ere yet the vision of the burning bush had been vouchsafed; and that, as in the vision of St. John in Patmos, voices were mingled with scenes, and the ear as certainly addressed as the eye. A “great darkness” first falls upon the prophet, like that which in an earlier age fell upon Abraham, but without the “horror”; and as the Divine Spirit moves on the face of the wildly troubled waters, as a visible aurora enveloped by the pitchy cloud, the great doctrine is orally enunciated, that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Unreckoned ages, condensed in the vision to a few brief moments, pass away; the creative word is again heard, “Let there be

<sup>1</sup> *Testimony of the Rocks*, pp. 186-191, ed. 1857.

light," and straightway a grey diffused light springs up in the east, and, casting its sickly gleam over a cloud-limited expanse of steaming, vaporous sea, journeys through the heavens towards the west. One heavy sunless day is made the representative of myriads ; the faint light waxes fainter—it sinks beneath the dim undefined horizon ; the first scene of the drama closes upon the seer ; and he sits a while on his hill-top in darkness, solitary but not sad, in what seems to be a calm and starless night.

‘The light again brightens—it is day ; and over an expanse of ocean, without visible bound, the horizon has become wider and sharper of outline than before. There is life in that great sea—invertebrate, mayhap also ichthyic, life ; but, from the comparative distance of the point of view occupied by the prophet, only the slow roll of its waves can be discerned, as they rise and fall in long undulations before a gentle gale ; and what most strongly impresses the eye is the change which has taken place in the atmospheric scenery. That lower stratum of the heavens occupied in the previous vision by seething steam, or grey, smoke-like fog, is clear and transparent ; and only in an upper region, where the previously invisible vapour of the tepid sea has thickened in the cold, do the clouds appear. But there, in the higher strata of the atmosphere they lie, thick and manifold—an upper sea of great waves, separated from those beneath by the transparent firmament, and, like them too, impelled in rolling masses by the wind. A mighty advance has taken place in creation ; but its most conspicuous optical sign is the existence of a transparent atmosphere—of a firmament stretched out over the earth, that separates the water above from the waters below. But darkness descends for the third time upon the seer, for



the evening and the morning have completed the second day.

‘Yet again the light rises under a canopy of cloud, but the scene has changed, and there is no longer an unbroken expanse of sea. The white surf breaks, at the distant horizon, on an insulated reef, formed mayhap by the Silurian or Old Red coral zoophytes ages before, during the bygone yesterday ; and beats in long lines of foam, nearer at hand, against the low, winding shore, the seaward barrier of a widely-spread country. For at the Divine command the land has arisen from the deep—not inconspicuously and in scattered islets, as at an earlier time, but in extensive though flat and marshy continents, little raised over the sea-level ; and a yet further fiat has covered them with the great carboniferous flora. The scene is one of mighty forests of cone-bearing trees—of palms and tree-ferns, and gigantic club-mosses, on the opener slopes, and of great reeds clustering by the sides of quiet lakes and dark rolling rivers. There is a deep gloom in the recesses of the thicker woods, and low, thick mists creep along the dank marsh or sluggish streams. But there is a general lightening of the sky overhead ; as the day declines, a redder flash than had hitherto lighted up the prospect falls athwart fern-covered bank and long withdrawing glade. And while the fourth evening has fallen on the prophet, he becomes sensible, as it wears on, and the fourth day approaches, that yet another change has taken place.

‘The Creator has spoken, and the stars look out from openings of deep unclouded blue ; and as day rises, and the planet of morning pales in the east, the broken cloudlets are transmuted from bronze into gold, and anon the gold becomes fire, and at length the glorious sun arises out of the

sea, and enters on his course rejoicing. It is a brilliant day ; the waves, of a deeper and softer blue than before, dance and sparkle in the light ; the earth, with little else to attract the gaze, has assumed a garb of richer green ; and as the sun declines amid ever richer glories than those which had encircled his rising, the moon appears full-orbed in the east,—to the human eye the second great luminary of the heavens,—and climbs slowly to the zenith as night advances, shedding its mild radiance on land and sea.

‘Again the day breaks ; the prospect consists, as before, of land and ocean. There are great pine woods, reed-covered swamps, wide plains, winding rivers, and broad lakes ; and a bright sun shines over all. But the landscape derives its interest and novelty from a feature unmarked before. Gigantic birds stalk along the sands, or wade far into the water in quest of their ichthyic food ; while birds of lesser size float upon the lakes, or scream discordant in hovering flocks, thick as insects in the calm of a summer evening, over the narrower seas, or brighten with the sunlit gleam of their wings the thick woods.

‘And ocean has its monsters : great *tanninim* tempest the deep, as they heave their huge bulk over the surface to inhale the life-sustaining air ; and out of their nostrils goeth smoke, as out of “a seething pot or caldron.” Monstrous creatures, armed in massive scales, haunt the rivers, or scour the flat rank meadows ; earth, air, and water are charged with animal life ; and the sun sets on a busy scene, in which unerring instinct pursues unremittingly its few simple ends—the support and preservation of the individual, the propagation of the species, and the protection and maintenance of the young.

‘Again the night descends, for the fifth day has closed ;

and morning breaks on the sixth and last day of creation. Cattle and beasts of the field graze on the plains ; the thick-skinned rhinoceros wallows in the marshes ; the squat hippopotamus rustles among the reeds, or plunges sullenly into the river ; great herds of elephants seek their food amid the young herbage of the woods ; while animals of fiercer nature—the lion, the leopard, and the bear—harbour in deep caves till the evening, or lie in wait for their prey amid tangled thickets, or beneath some broken bank. At length, as the day wanes and the shadows lengthen, man, the responsible lord of creation, formed in God's own image, is introduced upon the scene, and the work of creation ceases for ever upon the earth.

'The night falls once more upon the prospect, and there dawns yet another morrow—the morrow of God's rest—that divine Sabbath in which there is no more creative labour, and which, "blessed and sanctified" beyond all the days that had gone before, has as its special object the moral elevation and final redemption of man. And over *it* no evening is represented in the record as falling, for its special work is not yet complete. Such seems to have been the sublime panorama of creation exhibited in vision of old to

"The Shepherd who first taught the chosen seed,  
In the beginning how the heavens and earth  
Rose out of chaos" ;

and, rightly understood, I know not a single scientific truth that militates against even the minutest or least prominent of its details.'

The *Origin of Species* in 1859 was issued after Miller's death, but the leading doctrines of Darwin were not unknown before that time to the public

through the appearance of Robert Chambers's *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* in 1844, and a subsequent volume of 'Explanations' in 1846. This book caused almost as considerable a stir as that of Darwin himself, and the greatest care was taken by Chambers to conceal the authorship. The proof-sheets sent to Mr. Ireland in Manchester, were returned to the writer, who reforwarded them to Ireland, who in his turn despatched them to London. The guesses at the author ranged from Sir Charles Lyell up to the Prince Consort; and so strong were the feelings aroused that they defeated a proposal to bring in Chambers as Lord Provost of Edinburgh in 1848, and the secret was not formally divulged till the issue by Ireland in 1884 of a twelfth edition. The book is written in a 'powerful and brilliant style,' as Darwin says; and, though long out of print, its re-issue by Routledge and Son in their Universal Library has again drawn attention to its views, which in Scotland caused something of the stir produced by the appearance in England of *Essays and Reviews*. Chambers, indeed, regarded his book as 'the first attempt to connect the natural sciences into a history of creation. As such, it must necessarily be crude and unsatisfactory, yet I have thought the time was come for attempting to weave a great generalisation out of established natural truths.' Much of the popular ideas or misconceptions about the geological record is due to the *Vestiges*. It is not very strong in logic nor exact in individual branches of science, yet its influence

fully merited the detailed reply by Miller, in 1847, in the *Footprints of the Creator*, which he appropriately dedicated to Sir Philip Egerton, the highest authority on fossil fishes.

Chambers and his school had largely subscribed to the doctrines of Oken, by which no organism had been created of larger size than an infusorial point, and no organism created which was not microscopic; whatever exists larger, man himself included, having been developed and not created. To this Miller replies that this at least is not the testimony of the rocks. If it were true, it would follow that the oldest fossils would be small, and low in organisation. But, so far is this from being the case that the oldest organisms, whether that be the *asterolepis* or the *cephalaspidae* or the *acanthidae*, are large and high. One *asterolepis* found at Thurso measures over twelve feet, and a Russian specimen described by Professor Asmus of Dorpat seems to have reached the astonishing length of twenty-three feet. Thus, the earliest organisms 'instead of taking their place, agreeably to the demands of the development hypothesis, among the sprats, sticklebacks, and minnows of their class, took their place among its huge and basking sharks, gigantic sturgeons, and bulky sword-fishes. They were giants, not dwarfs.'

The prevalence of the brachiopods in the Silurian period over the *cephalaspidae* proves little. What the naturalist has to deal with is not quantity but quality, 'not the number of the low, but the standing of the

high. A country may be distinctly a country of flocks and herds, or a country of carnivorous mammalia, or like New South Wales or the Galapagos, a country of marsupial animals or of reptiles. Its human inhabitants may be merely a few hunters or shepherds, too inconsiderable in numbers to give it any peculiar standing as a home of men. But in estimating the highest point in the scale to which the animal kingdom has attained, it is of the few men, not of its many beasts, that we must take note.' Thus he maintains that the existence of a single cephalopod or one cuttlefish among a wilderness of brachiopods is sufficient to indicate the mark already attained in the scale of being, just as the existence of the human family, when restricted to a pair, indicated as clearly the scale as when its existence can be counted by millions. Under the clearing-system in the Western Highlands, Miller had, during 'the cruise of the Betsey,' noticed in the island of Rum a single shepherd and eight thousand sheep. Yet the human unit, to the naturalist, would outweigh all the lower organisms. Moreover, the brachiopods of the palæozoic age he would regard as larger than those existing now which have sunk by 'degradation' into inferior importance.

The proof of the development theory in the realm of fossil flora he would regard as still more questionable. It had been asserted that in the carboniferous age no exogenous plant had appeared; that before the Lias nature had not succeeded in producing a tree, and that

the vegetation of the coal-measures had been 'magnificent immaturities' of the vegetable kingdom. But the quarry of Craigleith, near Edinburgh, alone would refute it, not to speak of the coal-fields of Dalkeith and Falkirk with their araucarians and pines. While Brongniart had denied to the Lower 'Old Red' anything higher than a lichen or a moss, 'the ship carpenter might have hopefully taken axe in hand, to explore the woods for some such stately pine as the one described by Milton :

"Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast  
Of some great ammiral."'

It might be thought, however, that to the geological argument from development some consolation might be left from the general fact of the lower producing the higher. Yet even here the Lamarckian theory fails. Fishes were earlier than the beasts of the field and man. But we are still a long way from any proof that 'the peopling of the earth was one of a natural kind, requiring time'; or that the predecessors of man were his progenitors. So far as geology is concerned, superposition is not parental relation, so that there is no necessity for the lower producing the higher. Nor has transmutation of marine into terrestrial vegetation been proved. This had been the mainstay of the Lamarckian hypothesis, and had been adopted from the brilliant but fancifully written *Telliamed* (an anagram, by the way, of the author's name) of De Maillet by both Oken and Chambers, who had found in the *Delphinidæ*

the marine progenitors of the *Simiadae*, and through them of man—a curious approximation to some recent crude ideas of Professor Drummond in his *Ascent of Man*. They had pointed to the general or supposed agreement in fauna and flora between the Galapagos and South America, between the Cape de Verde Islands and Africa; yet in such a period of conversion plants of an intermediate character would be found, and thousands of years have failed to produce such a specimen. Thus geology, botany, and zoology would seem to afford slight support to the Darwinian theory, at least in the state of the argument as presented in the *Vestiges*, unless a very large draft upon the mere imagination is made.

And such a demand is made by Darwin. 'If,' says he, 'my theory be true, it is indisputable that before the lowest Silurian stratum was deposited, long periods elapsed, as long as, or probably far longer than, the whole interval from the Silurian age to the present day; and that, during these vast, yet quite unknown periods of time, the world teemed with living creatures.' This, however, we may say with the Regent Morton, is only 'a devout imagination'; and it might be more scientific to take the geological record as we find it, for, says Miller, 'it is difficult to imagine that that uniform cessation of organised life at one point, which seems to have conducted Sir Roderick Murchison and Professor Sedgwick to their conclusion, should thus have been a mere effect of accident. Accident has its laws, but uniformity

is not one of them; and should the experience be invariable, as it already seems extensive, that immediately beneath the fucoidal beds organic remains cease, I do not see how the conclusion is to be avoided, that they represent the period in which, at least, *existences capable of preservation* were first introduced.' Indeed the hypothesis of Darwin would fall under the remark of Herodotus, that the old theorists and speculators at the last resort betook themselves to a belief in an imaginary ocean-river or to something in the interior of the earth where observation was of necessity excluded. For, as Professor Bain says, the assertion of a fact wholly beyond the reach of evidence for or against, is to be held as untrue: we are not obliged to show that a thing is not,—the burden lies on them who maintain that the thing is.

We have said that those who ultimately live in each branch of science are few. It is only by the combination in perfection of imagination and observation that success is ensured. Miller had noticed in the writer of the *Vestiges* the absence of original observation and abstract thinking, or the power of seeing and reasoning for himself. In truth, there is something in geological speculation akin to what Professor Jebb has noticed in the field of classical emendation and of textual criticism, especially in Germany, where scholarship is a crowded profession, and eminence is often temporarily won by boldness of handling the texts. But even Ritschl, with all his heavy apparatus of learning, singularly fails in

comparison with the sagacity of Bentley or the instinct of Porson. What habits of classical verse-composition had done for these scholars is brought to the geologist by observation. This, in unison with creative mental power, will alone preserve the name of the natural scientist. The first has kept White of Selborne a literary evergreen: the second has maintained his place for Cuvier. Miller's own friend, Dr. Longmuir, rightly singles out this Champollion-like trait of *sagacity* as his most characteristic feature, by which 'he seemed by intuition to perceive what cost other minds no small amount of careful investigation.' He was very cautious in statement, and laborious in the acquisition of his data. In his works the reader will find no second-hand statements, no airy generalisation; even in fields where special research in minute departments had been by circumstances denied to him, his gift of constructive imagination often enables him to supply such defects as later investigators may have detected and added. 'The more,' says Professor Huxley, 'I study the fishes of the Old Red, the more I am struck by the patience and sagacity manifested in his researches, and by the natural insight which, in his case, seems to have supplied the want of special anatomical knowledge.'

And what is true in science is also no less true in his purely literary performances. The reader of his articles, political or social, cannot fail to be struck with the pertinence of his quotations and illustrations. What he knew was instantly at the call of a powerful memory and

a vigorous imagination. As an editor, he had not to go to memory for his metaphors, and to his imagination for his facts. Both came easily and naturally; and his writing, even in its most sustained flights, shows no signs of effort. Some critics have detected in his style an element of exuberance; and this may be allowed in his narrative and descriptive passages. There would appear to have been, as it were, a Celtic lobe of imagination in his mind for the feeling of discursive description and external nature. Thus, in his slightest landscapes his imagination or eye is not satisfied with the few bold touches such as Carlyle would, after his manner, throw upon the canvas. It expands, like the method of Ruskin, over the surface. But in each case the defect is the result of original endowment. The eye, he says, had been in his case exclusively trained as a mason, and this habit of seeing the projected line complete from the beginning was at the bottom of his often spoiling the effect of his narrative with flamboyant additions, through his possession of the geological eye for its conformation in detail. Johnson said of Thomson that he had a true poetical genius—the power of seeing even a pair of candles in a poetical light. The landscape became to Miller at once anatomised into its geological aspects.

But in his strictly scientific passages this is not so. There the style is simple in expression and close in reasoning. When we consider the great amount of solid literary performance, and of minute observation, re-

corded in his *Cruise of the Betsey* and his *Rambles of a Geologist*, extending over the West Coast and the Orkneys—when we know that much of his work consisted of papers in *The Witness*, republished, like *The Old Red Sandstone*, in book form with the necessary additions, we shall wonder at the fertility and the quickness of the mind that could, in the midst of distracting journalistic demands on his time and attention, produce such a mass of varied and finished work in science and literature. And of the work in *The Witness* as a political writer, we need only say that the present ecclesiastical condition of Scotland bears largely his impress. Till he came and gave expression to the feeling of the country in the columns of his paper, the people had to a considerable extent believed the question at issue to be one that concerned mainly the clergy. This had been the standpoint of the Moderate organs, in a wary attempt to win over the laity. But by the *Letter to Brougham* he won the ear of the people, and to the end he never lost it. By 1841 the political candidates in Scotland at the general election had proclaimed themselves, with a single exception, in favour of some distinct alteration of the law of patronage. Whether Church papers are or are not a blessing—in England they have become a menace to political action and a medium for the most offensive clericalism and reactionary measures—may safely be left out of account in settling the question in his own case, for, as we have seen, he had never consented to make his paper a merely ecclesiastical organ. But of

the work which he accomplished as a leader-writer and as an exponent of popular rights we have the unhesitating estimate of Guthrie: 'The battle of Christ's rights as Head of the Church, and of the people's rights as members of the body of which He is the Head, was fought and won in every town and a large number of the parishes of Scotland, mainly by Hugh Miller, through the columns of *The Witness* newspaper.' Of it he himself, in the closing sentences of the *Schools and Schoolmasters*, could say with modesty that it took its place among our first-class Scottish newspapers, and that it numbered among its subscribers a larger percentage of readers with a university education than any other. Nor would he, perhaps, have considered it as among the least of his journalistic successes that his name and connection could win for the elder Bethune, at the close of his wintry day, the proposed editorship of the *Dumfries Standard*, which would have done much to have brightened the life of his old fellow-contributor to Wilson's *Border Tales* had not the poet been removed before him by death.

In science there are stars and stars, to borrow the adage of Thackeray upon men. There are stars that are fixed. In his own line of geology, as an inspirationist, we think his name will not soon pass away. There may be defects of knowledge, but there is no defect of spirit; and here we cannot do better than set down the opinion of his friend, Sir Archibald Geikie, who has a connection both with Miller and with

Murchison through his occupancy of the Murchisonian Chair of Geology in the University of Edinburgh. Both Miller and Murchison came out of the Black Isle. In a communication to us of the date 22nd December 1895, he thus writes :—

‘Hugh Miller will always occupy a peculiar place in the history of geology, and in the ranks of geological literature. He was not in any sense a trained geologist. He lacked the habit of patient and detailed investigation in departments of the science that did not specially interest him, but which were essential as a basis of accurate induction and successful speculation. In all that relates to the stratigraphical sequence of the formations, for example, he accepted what had been done by others without any critical examination of it. Thus, in his own region—the north of Scotland—he believed that a girdle of Old Red Sandstone nearly encircles the older crystalline rocks of Ross and Sutherland—a view then generally adopted. Yet he had actually walked over ground where, with even an elementary knowledge of structural geology, he could have corrected the prevalent error. It is, of course, no reproach to him that he left matters as he found them in that respect ; his genius did not find in such questions the appropriate field of its exertion.

‘Nor though he occupied himself all through his life with fossils, can he be called a palæontologist. He had no education in comparative anatomy, and was thus incompetent to deal adequately as a naturalist with the organisms which he discovered. He was himself perfectly conscious of the limitations of his powers in this department, and thus wisely refrained from burdening the literature of science

with descriptions and names which would have been revised, and perhaps entirely recast, by some subsequent more competent biologist.

‘Hugh Miller’s unique position is that of a poetic student of the geological side of Nature, who possessed an unrivalled gift of vividly communicating to others the impressions made on his own mind by the observation of geological fact and by the inferences which such observation seemed to warrant. His lively imagination led him to seize more especially on those aspects of the past history of the earth which could be most vividly realised. He loved to collect the plants and animals of which the remains have been entombed among the rocks, and to re-people with them the scenes in which they lived long ages ago. Each scattered fact was marshalled by his eager fancy into its due place in the mental picture which he drew of such long-vanished lands, lakes, rivers, and seas. His enthusiasm supplied details where facts were wanting, and enabled him to kindle in his readers not a little of the burning interest which he felt himself.

‘Long study of the best English literature had given Miller a rare mastery of his mother tongue. For elegance of narrative combined with clearness and vividness of description, I know no writing in the whole of scientific literature superior, or, indeed, perhaps equal to his. There can be no doubt that this literary gift, appealing as it did to so wide a circle of readers, formed a chief source of the influence which he exerted among his contemporaries. It was this that enabled him to spread so widely a curiosity to know something of geological science, and an interest in the progress of geological discovery. I do not think that the debt which geology owes to him for these services, in

deepening the popular estimation of the science, and in increasing the number of its devotees, has ever been sufficiently acknowledged. During his lifetime, and for some years afterwards, Hugh Miller was looked upon by the general body of his countrymen as the leading geologist of his day. And this exaggerated but very natural estimate spread perhaps even more extensively in the United States. His books were to be found in the remotest log-hut of the Far West, and on both sides of the Atlantic ideas of the nature and scope of geology were largely drawn from them.

‘Of the extent and value of Miller’s original contributions to geology I am, perhaps, hardly fitted to speak. He was one of my earliest and kindest scientific friends. He used to relate to me the results of his summer rambles before he had time to set them down in writing. He admitted me into the intimacy of his inner thoughts on geological questions and controversies. He brought me completely under the spell of his personal charm, and filled me with an enthusiastic love for the man as well as a passionate admiration for the geologist. Nor has the glamour of that early friendship passed away. I would rather leave to others the invidious task of coldly dissecting Hugh Miller’s work and seeing how much of it has been a permanent addition to science, and how much has passed away with the crudities of advancing knowledge. I will only say that there cannot be any doubt that his contributions to the stock of geological fact were much less important than the influence which his writings ever had in furthering the spread of an appreciation of geological science throughout the English-speaking world.

‘There were two departments in which his best original

work was done. One of these was the Old Red Sandstone, where he laid the foundations of his fame as an observer and describer of Nature. His unwearied devotion to the task of collecting the fishes of the Old Red Sandstone, and his patient industry in piecing their broken fragments together, opened up a new chapter in the history of Life on our globe. The other department was that which embraces the story of the Ice Age. Miller was one of the pioneers in the study of the Boulder-Clay. The last years of his life were more especially devoted to that interesting formation in which he found fossil shells in many parts of Scotland where they had never been found before. I well remember my last interview with him, only a few evenings before his death. He had spent a short holiday in the low ground about Bucklyvie between the Forth and Clyde, and had collected a number of marine shells, which led him to draw a graphic picture of what must have been the condition of central Scotland during a part of the glacial period. On the same occasion he questioned me as usual about my own geological doings. I had been surveying in detail the geological structure of Arthur's Seat at Edinburgh, and showed him my maps. He went over them with lively comments, and, when he had done, turned round to his eldest daughter, then a girl at school, and gave her in his own pictorial way a sketch of the history of the volcano that had piled up the picturesque hill on the eastern outskirts of the city.

'I count it as one of the privileges of my life to have known Hugh Miller, and as one of its chief losses that he was so suddenly removed when I had hardly realised the full value of his friendship and of his genial enthusiasm. His writings formed my earliest geological text-books, and

I shall never cease to look back upon their influence with gratitude. They ought to be far more widely read than they seem now to be. Assuredly no young geologist will find more stimulating chapters than those penned by the author of the *Old Red Sandstone*.'

The statue erected to him by his countrymen presents to the eye of the traveller one of the most striking features of the landscape as he approaches the little town of Cromarty. No more fitting scene could be found than that which commands the magnificent sweep of water over which Miller's eye had ranged when a boy. Of the Scott Monument in Edinburgh he had said that no monument could be in keeping and in character that was not Gothic; and no one to himself could be true that forgot the interpreter of the Old Red Sandstone. As late as 1836, Buckland in his *Bridgewater Treatise* had briefly dismissed it, and it was a new revelation in geology to make known its scientific importance. In dedicating the book to Sir Roderick Murchison, who had been born at Taradale on the Beaulieu Firth in 1792, he could say that Smith, the father of English geology, had been born upon the Oolite: they, he added, had been born upon the Old Red. Rarely could nature afford a more striking example of the true and the picturesque, than in these two widely differing memorials, the one in the Princes Street of his 'own romantic town,' the other looking over the expanse of the Cromarty Firth. In life these men had never met, and in type they were

totally distinct. Yet in the great features of integrity and force of character no two men could more strikingly agree. Both wrote with their eyes on the object, and both were loyal to fact. Of Miller we may say what Carlyle had said of Sir Walter, that no sounder piece of British manhood had been put together in this century of time, and that, when he departed, he took a man's life along with him.

A man of the people, he was understood by the people; and he wished it to be so. When we passed through the Sutors of Cromarty some years ago, about six in the morning of a fine summer day, there was a sailor at the wheel on the bridge. Under the belief that we were strangers to the locality, he pointed out the statue in the distance and gave an account, correct in the main, of what Miller had been and what he had done. In dwelling upon the life the narrator seemed to borrow respect for the dignity of all labour and of his own calling. Goldsmith thought of Burke that in giving up to party what was meant for mankind he had narrowed his mental powers and lessened his influence and force. It may be that there are some who think that, in doing the ecclesiastical work which he accomplished, he had given up to the Church of Scotland in all her branches what was meant for science. Such a judgment would be incorrect; it would certainly be one which would but feebly reflect the convictions of all Scotchmen. It is a true remark of the elder Disraeli that few men of science have either by their work or in

their life influenced the staple of the thinking of humanity. To influence a whole people is certainly given but rarely to any one man. But to mould the opinions of his countrymen in a lasting sense,—and no higher object would he have desired—was no less certainly given to Hugh Miller.





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